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ST. MONICA.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
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AND PARLIAMENT STREET

THE MOTHER

OF

SAINT AUGUSTINE.

BY

LADY HERBERT.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

PUBLISHER IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY.

1868.

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TO ONE WHO BEARS THE NAME OF

'Monica'

AND WHO HAS SHOWN

IN THE MIDST OF GREAT AND VARIED TRIALS

A COURAGE, PATIENCE, AND FIDELITY

WORTHY OF THAT GREAT SAINT,

THIS TRANSLATION OF HER LIFE

IS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

Introduction.

A BIOGRAPHY like this which we are about to present to our readers should not be written. It should be sung, for it is a poem. It is the history of the most beautiful and the purest love that has ever existed; the tenderest and at the same time the strongest; passing through twenty-five years of trial and of fear, without faltering for an instant in its course; becoming only the more ardent as difficulties increase; and finally ending in a flood of triumph and of ecstasy, of glory and of joy.

Look at Ary Scheffer's picture of St. Monica and her Son, sitting in the window at Ostia, overlooking the sea. It is of that mother we would write, to console the anxious, fearful mothers of these days, and to reveal to them the enormous power God has put into their hands for the safety of their children.

Leibnitz writes, "The world would be reformed if we could reform its education." We say, "That the world would be reformed if we could transform the mothers;" that is, if we could make them see the source of their strength, and could induce them perseveringly to push that strength to its extreme limits, in order to save the souls of their children. We would say to them all, "What do you fear?

Your sons will be what you make them — good, noble, generous, unselfish, fearing God—if you yourselves implant those feelings in their hearts, and confirm them by your own example." There are many perils and difficulties which a mother cannot foresee, cannot avert. There are none that she cannot overcome in the end, if she will make use of the means God has given her; if she will only *will* their salvation, "*will*" it with all the powers of her soul and spirit, and offer up her whole life for that end.

The Comte de Maistre, writing one day to his daughter Constance, who was complaining of the position of women in society, and wishing that they could all become authoresses, says: "You are mistaken, my child, as to

the true power and mission of women. Women, it is true, have neither written the 'Iliad' nor the 'Odyssey,' nor 'Jerusalem Delivered,' nor 'Athalia,' but they have created far greater marvels than these. It is by them and on their knees that what is most excellent in the world is formed and perfected. Do you think," he added, "that I should have been as grateful to your mother for writing a clever novel as for giving me your brother? And when I say that, I do not mean merely bringing him into the world, and putting him into his cradle, but forming his heart and mind to be what he is. The true mission of a woman is in her home, to make her husband happy, and to bring up his children; that is, to *create great men.* That is

the 'second birth,' which has not been cursed like the first!"

Doubtless, if the mother's life be absorbed in frivolity and pleasure, the child's will bear the same stamp; but we do not speak of mothers like these.

Look at St. Bernard, where did he learn his purity, his faith, his burning love of God? from his holy mother Aleth. To whom did St. Symphorian owe the heroism of his life and of his death but to his mother Augusta? And St. John Chrysostom, and St. Athanasius, and St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory the Great; and, later still, St. Louis, St. Edward, St. François d'Assisi, St. François de Sales, St. Theresa? The time would fail us to enumerate the names of all the heroes and saints trained by their mothers for

their great and noble destinies. Well might Horace exclaim, "Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis;" and again, we read in Holy Scripture, "Generatio rectorum benedicetur."

But to act thus on the hearts and minds of their children, mothers must suffer, must weep and pray, must offer the sacrifice of their very lives, if need be, to snatch them from evil and draw them to God. The real Christian mother, who would sooner see her son die than stained with mortal sin, has given to the world, in all ages, an example before which Pagan heroines fade into insignificance. See the mother of the holy twins of Langres kissing the chains of her three little children in the prison, and exhorting them to die with courage for their

faith; or St. Symphorosa, trembling lest her boy of sixteen should shrink under the torture, running before him crying out, "My son! they cannot take your life. They can only exchange it for a better!" Or again, St. Denise, seeing her beautiful child expiring under the lash, yet sustaining him by her courage, her voice, and her look to the last! Does it not seem impossible to fathom agonies like those of Symphorosa, Felicita, and others, who saw their children die inch by inch under the cruelty of their tormentors, and yet never flinched from the untold martyrdom, and could even rejoice in the triumphs of their faith? It is rarely, indeed, in these days that mothers have to go through sufferings of this kind; but their mission is not the

less arduous or important. The storms of heresy and unbelief are rising up on all sides to turn their sons from their childhood's faith. The luxury and self-indulgence of the age are for ever causing them to drift into the current of impurity and vice with which they are surrounded. What shall be their anchor and their stay? What but the mother's ever watchful love and warning voice? And should these efforts fail, from unavoidable separation or other causes, she has still one all-powerful arm—her tears before God. Read in Holy Scripture how these were answered. Look at Hagar, in the Old Testament, and in the New, at the Canaanitish woman and the widow of Nain. Why were these miracles multiplied by our Lord? but to prove to

mothers the august power He has placed in their hands; and to teach them, whatever may be the wanderings or youthful follies of their sons, how, by dint of sufferings and sacrifices and prayers, they may bring them back to God. If, in the seventeenth century, St. François de Sales sustained, strengthened, and consoled a host of Christian mothers by the example of St. Monica, why should not a similar example produce its fruits in the nineteenth? Are the dangers less pressing? are not the needs as great? Perhaps there never was a moment when wives and mothers, if worthy of the name, were called upon to bear such deep sorrows. Let them then read the history of St. Monica. Let them learn from this model of wives and mothers to pray and to weep

like her, to hope to the end, never to be discouraged, and to believe that if the young men of the present day yield to their terrible temptations, it is because there are not enough tears and prayers in the hearts of their wives and mothers ascending daily and hourly before the throne of God.

Life of St. Monica.

CHAPTER I.

"Lisez l'Histoire de Sainte Monique. Vous y verrez le soin qu'elle eut de son Augustin et plusieurs choses qui vous consoleront."

(Lettre de St. François de Sales à Madame de Chantal.)

THE road from the ruins of Carthage to those of Hippone, passing by the ancient Sicca Veneria, traverses one of the most beautiful countries in the earth. From the earliest times it was famed for its fertility; and in these days, although for twelve centuries wasted and desolate, French occupation has restored its pristine beauty, and vineyards and olive groves, and oranges and citrons have sprung up as by a miracle from that desert soil: while fragments of statues, broken

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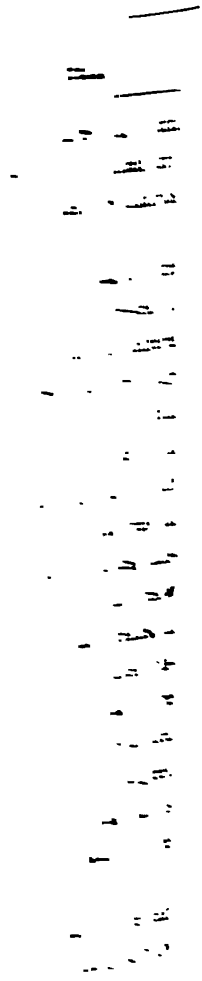

to a little girl, during a time of danger and difficulty, which in that era of revolution overwhelmed so many of the noblest Roman families. She and her husband had remained Catholics when their native town had fallen almost universally into the Donatist heresy, and this circumstance added to the isolation from their family and friends, which political convulsions had caused. Little else is known of their previous lives; but at the time of their babe's birth, who received at the baptismal font the name of Monica, they appear to have been in straitened circumstances for their position in life, with numerous servants, but small means to keep up appearances. The little Monica was thus early inured to privations of various kinds; and to this training she probably owed that just appreciation of the value of earthly possessions, and that longing for a heavenly inheritance, which became in after life her marked characteristics. The year of her birth was signalised by being likewise that of St. Jerome, who first saw

columns, ruined amphitheatres (all, in fact, vestiges of the finest era of Roman art), crop out here and there amidst this luxurious vegetation.

About the middle of this road, at a little distance from the famous battle-field of Zama, on the slope of a mountain feathered at its base by olive trees, is a little village called by the Arabs *Souk Arras*. Its small white houses are built on the site of an ancient Roman city called Tagaste, of which the ruins, half buried in the sand, peep out here and there amid clusters of aloes, acanthus, and prickly pear. The plain below is intersected by different small streams, all flowing into the Medjirda, the ancient Bagradas of the Romans. Beyond, to the south, stretches the desert, which is divided from the fertile plains by a belt of evergreen oak; and to the north is the sea, with its boundless horizon rarely broken by the passing sails.

It was on this mountain-side, in the year 332, that a lady named Faconda gave birth

to a little girl, during a time of danger and difficulty, which in that era of revolution overwhelmed so many of the noblest Roman families. She and her husband had remained Catholics when their native town had fallen almost universally into the Donatist heresy, and this circumstance added to the isolation from their family and friends, which political convulsions had caused. Little else is known of their previous lives; but at the time of their babe's birth, who received at the baptismal font the name of Monica, they appear to have been in straitened circumstances for their position in life, with numerous servants, but small means to keep up appearances. The little Monica was thus early inured to privations of various kinds; and to this training she probably owed that just appreciation of the value of earthly possessions, and that longing for a heavenly inheritance, which became in after life her marked characteristics. The year of her birth was signalised by being likewise that of St. Jerome, who first saw

the light at Stridon in Dalmatia. St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Hilary of Poictiers, St. Martin of Tours, and a host of other saints, were preparing in different parts of the Christian world for the fight which each was to wage for the faith, and under the banner of their Lord. The Church was rising from the catacombs, and St. Sylvester on the papal throne, and St. Athanasius in the episcopal see of Alexandria, were nobly maintaining their ground against the heresies of the day. In speaking of her early education, St. Monica often dwelt not only on her mother's tender care, but on that of an old servant who had been her father's nurse. This admirable woman, held in the most affectionate veneration by the child whom she had reared, and at whose marriage she had assisted, lived her life over again, as it were, in the care and nurture of this his greatest earthly treasure, and guarded the cradle with a vigilance which such faithful love alone could show. Thus tenderly

watched and preserved from harm, the child grew rapidly in the knowledge of all that was "lovely and of good report." She was still quite a little thing, when she would steal away to the church, and there, in an angle of the wall, kneeling, with her hands clasped and her eyes modestly cast down, she would forget the time in her intercourse with God. Sometimes, on her returning late and alone, her nurse would scold, and even beat her; but she bore it all patiently, nor did this severe treatment ever diminish her affection for one whom she always called her "second mother." Often, when at play with her companions, she would disappear, and be found by them under a tree, so absorbed in meditation that she had forgotten all about the game; and on other occasions she would rise in the night, secretly, to repeat the prayers her mother had taught her. Another strong inclination soon showed itself in the little Monica, and that was her love for the poor. She used to hide in her pinafore any little delicacy given

to her, and then secretly look out for some poor child at the door on whom she could bestow it. Travellers and sick were the especial objects of her pity. When the former arrived under her father's hospitable roof she would plead for and obtain permission to wash their feet, according to the fashion of those times; while to the sick and suffering she would render every service in the power of a child so young and feeble. Her gentleness and sweet temper were always most remarkable. She was the very spirit of peace; and in the little quarrels of her companions, her very presence would put a stop to them. There was something in her calm loving look which, without her knowing it, influenced everyone who came near her.

To the natural gifts given her by God was added what we should consider the almost over-severe discipline of her nurse. Except at the hours when she was accustomed to share her parents' meals, she was never allowed to drink even a drop of water,

though she might be dying of thirst. It was her nurse's idea, to accustom her in this way to penance and self-denial, and especially to cultivate in her charge that spirit of self-sacrifice so necessary to a Christian in whatever position of life. Yet little faults sometimes dimmed the bright character of this fair child; and St. Augustine, who loved to trace in his mother's early life every indication of the ways by which God had moulded her to the perfection which she at last attained, relates the story as follows. She used to be sent to draw wine for the pilgrims and others who came to her father's house, and in doing so acquired the habit of sipping a little from each glass, more from childish fun than anything else; but by degrees she got to take more and more. This was perceived by a young servant who accompanied her to the cellar, and who afterwards, in a fit of passion, retorted on her mistress for something she had said, by calling her a "Wine-bibber." Stung with remorse, and with a sudden

perception of her fault, Monica severely corrected herself for it, and ever after refused to drink anything but water. This venial sin in reality brought about the happiest results in the formation of her character. It made her humble and diffident of herself, and gave her that taste for mortification and self-denial which prepared her to meet courageously the many trials and sufferings of her after life.

About this time (that is, in 348–9) Monica had the joy of seeing her native town entirely delivered from the yoke of heresy, and restored to Catholic unity. She was then sixteen, and had just made her first Communion. To great natural gifts and personal beauty was added a modesty which charmed all who came in contact with her. Her parents wished to give her the rich apparel suitable to her rank, but she invariably refused all such presents, contenting herself with the simple white robe, without trimmings or other ornaments, worn by young Christians in those days,

and of which we see so many paintings in the catacombs.

Thus passed the early years of our saint, when the time came for her settlement in life; and this pure and holy child, by the inscrutable decrees of Providence, was given in marriage to a man in no way worthy of her, a Pagan, of noble birth indeed, but small means, of violent temper and dissolute habits, and for whom she is said to have entertained a positive repugnance. Who can fathom the reasons which induced her parents to bring about a union fraught with such unhappiness and danger to their daughter? It resembled the old punishment of the heathens, who used to fasten a living to a dead body and shut them both up in one room! It is impossible to understand their motives, except on the supposition that God overruled their judgment in order to purify by suffering the body and soul of her who was to be the mother of so great a saint.

Be that as it may, it is certain that after

a time Monica accepted the hand of Patricius, believing that by this heroic sacrifice she could thereby save a soul; and after many prayers, not one of which was offered in vain, she plighted her troth at the altar with a calm dignity and a tender modesty which touched even to tears all those who took part in the ceremony.

Nothing is sadder than an ill-assorted union. Every day some illusion is dispelled. One by one, cherished dreams and hopes of happiness must be given up, or drop like autumn leaves; differences of character and of temper combine to tear away the veil from the hard and cruel reality; and with this awakening comes the hopeless feeling that the tie is eternal. Surely, were it not for the grace of God, many a heart would sink at once in utter discouragement and despair.

St. Monica had hitherto always lived in a Christian home. She did not even guess at the miseries of a family in which God did not preside, and where passions, unre-

strained by principle, make a very hell upon earth. Her mother-in-law was still alive, and, as if to make her position the more insupportable, Monica was compelled to live with her. A Pagan like her son, she resembled him also in character; violent, imperious, and bitter, she added to these qualities a jealousy which knew no bounds. The servants were on a par with their masters. Not daring to treat their young mistress with personal violence, they revenged themselves on her by the vilest calumnies; and, to curry favour with the mother, did not scruple to malign in every possible way the character of her daughter-in-law. In this cruel position, what could a girl of two-and-twenty do but throw herself on the tenderness and protection of her husband? Unfortunately, however, poor Monica had not even that consolation. Patricius could not understand either her wishes or her way of life. Her prayers bored, her alms enraged him. That she should wish to visit the sick and poor; that

she should love the slaves, and care to alleviate their sufferings; all this was to him perfectly incomprehensible. At every turn our saint met with the contradictions so well described by Tertullian, in speaking of mixed marriages at that time. "How," he exclaims, "is it possible for a Christian woman to serve God when tied to a man who does not worship Him? If she wants to go to church, he will fix that hour to meet her at the baths; if she ought to fast, he will order a feast for that very day; if she wishes to go out, the servants will be too busy. Will such a husband ever suffer his wife to visit the indigent? to rise at midnight for the holy offices of Christmas or Easter? to kneel at the altar held in abhorrence by the Pagans? to wash the feet of the saints, and kiss the chains of the martyrs? If she should wish to feed the hungry, to cheer the pilgrim, barns and cellars and all will be closed to her prayers!"

This was the life to which St. Monica

had been condemned. This was her daily suffering. But even to this she could have resigned herself, had not her purity and modesty been likewise so continually assailed. In her complete innocence during the first days of her marriage, she was almost unable to comprehend the full horror of her position. But when she had fully realised it, even then her noble courage did not desert her. She understood as at a glance the mission which God had given her; and, instead of leaving her husband's roof (as another noble Roman lady had done, named Gabiola, married to a man of equally bad character), she resolved at once to devote her whole life to his reformation and conversion. And to this end, she employed neither words nor discussions, still less reproaches.* Instead of preaching virtue, she practised it. She tried to

* St. Augustine, speaking of this, says, "Sategit eum lucrari tibi, loquens te illi moribus suis, quibus eam pulchram faciebas, et reverenter amabilem atque mirabilem viro."—*Confess.* lib. ix. cap. ix.

become more and more gentle, humble, patient, and devoted; feeling sure that the day would come when Patricius would yield to a persuasion so touching and so true. But for this, both time and heroic virtue were needed. She resolved to try both. She could not be blind to the weaknesses and infidelities of her husband; but she never uttered a word. She suffered in silence. Now and then in his absence her tears would flow, in spite of herself; but, knowing what folly it was to expect that a man would love a woman faithfully who had not the love of God, she prayed above all things for the gift of faith for her husband, and for that Divine love which can alone inspire chastity into the heart of man. She showed the same discretion, prudence, and sweetness when he abandoned himself to the fury of his ungovernable passion. What was to be done with a man beside himself with rage? She waited till the fit was over; and then, seizing her opportunity when they were alone, and when

men, however violent, have a return of compunction and a wish to make amends to those who have suffered from their fury, she would, with great gentleness and delicacy, point out to him the folly of his conduct, mingling her tender reproaches with a word or two of advice or explanation, which were almost invariably well received. This method she often recommended to her young friends, who, with bruised and swollen faces, in consequence of the violence of their husbands in those brutal times, used to come and pour out their complaints to her. "It is the consequence of your tongues," she would say with a smile. And they saw she was right; for, although her husband was more passionate than all the others, yet he never struck her; her gentle look always restrained him.

By degrees this admirable conduct produced on him a marked effect. The love which he had always felt for her was heightened by respect and admiration; and thus the foundation was laid for that won-

derful conversion which she had yet to earn by years of bitter sacrifices, and often apparently fruitless tears. But Monica had learnt at the foot of the Crucifix that absolute trust in God which nothing could discourage, and which was the secret of her strength.

It was in the midst of trials like these that God sent her that greatest of all human consolations, a mother's joy. It was on the 13th November 354 that she gave birth to her first boy, so famous in all future ages under the name of St. Augustine. It is said that even before his birth, a revelation had been granted to her of the great works he was to accomplish for the Church of God. Her second boy was named Navigius, a timid, gentle, and pious but sickly child, living a quiet hidden life of prayer and devotion to his mother, and who became later the father of St. Augustine's favourite nephew Patricio, deacon of his church, and of two girls, who both became spouses of Jesus Christ. After

these two sons, whom, as St. Augustine magnificently expresses it, "she conceived in her womb for a temporal life, and in her heart for an eternal one," Monica had a little girl, to whom she gave the name of "Perpetua," which was that of the Martyr Saint of Carthage. Of her history, unfortunately, little is known, but that she was brought up by her mother in every good and pious sentiment; that she married, then became a widow, and being without children, went and kept her brother Augustine's house until the day of his ordination. After that, he would have no woman under his roof, not even his sister. She then devoted herself to a religious life, and became superior of one of the convents founded by St. Augustine. From the cradle to the grave, her life was so holy that the great Doctor always gave her the name of "The Saint."

Such was Monica's family. In vain is the father a Pagan—in vain do the mother-in-law and the servants combine to make

all Christian education impossible — her children, one and all, become saints; as if God wished to prove to us what a real mother can do, alone and unaided, and what a blessing it is for children to have been conceived in a heart absorbed like Monica's in the love of God.

All mothers love their children, but to those whom an unhappy marriage has embittered, this love has a keenness, a vigilance, and an intensity unknown almost to those whose lives have been brightened by mutual conjugal affection. Such was Monica's devotion. Even before her boy's birth she had consecrated him with all the ardour of her soul to God, so that, as St. François de Sales remarks, "St. Augustin avait déjà goûté le sel de Dieu dès le sein de sa mè e." It is very beautiful to see how in every page of St. Augustine's "Confessions" the expression occurs, "Ab utero matris meæ." If any spark of good, if any love for Jesus Christ, if any horror of evil remained in his heart during those wild and sinful years of

his life, he attributed each good or holy impulse to that one source—his mother's holiness and prayers from the first moment of her conception. No sooner was he born, than Monica had him carried to church; and as infant baptism was then rare and exceptional, and contrary to the established usage, she insisted that he should, at any rate, be inscribed in the number of catechumens, that is, among those who aspired to Holy Baptism; and the cross was marked on his forehead of Him under whose banner hereafter he was to be so valiant a soldier.

There was no fear that a mother of this sort would entrust to others the nursing of her child, and it was from the pure breast of Monica that St. Augustine drew both his human and divine nourishment. As he grew older, she felt more and more the awful responsibility of her charge, and the special importance in his particular case of awakening in his heart that tenderness of conscience which would be his only safe-

guard in the midst of the perilous examples with which his father would surround his youth. To inspire him with the great principles of her faith, with a contempt for the perishable and fleeting pleasures of the world, and with a longing for the eternal and invisible, was her constant aim. We know how well she succeeded. That delicacy of feeling, that hungering after something he could not find, even in his worst days, that sublime cry when the hour of his conversion came, "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, O my God, and our hearts find no rest save in Thee,"—all this was the fruit of her early teaching. But she added a second and even more powerful incentive; she spoke to him incessantly of the love of God, as shown in His sacred infancy, and in His awful death on the cross; in the might and power and incredible vastness of that love; and then drew from it lessons of gratitude and generosity in the service of such a Master, which made a profound impression on the naturally noble heart of her child. Then,

to put a finishing touch to her teaching, she strove to inspire him with a horror of everything that was degrading and dishonourable; and these feelings became so deeply ingrained in his nature, that no subsequent follies or excesses could efface them. In a word, she had planted a *conscience* in his heart which never allowed him peace or rest till he found both in the bosom of his God.

A little anecdote of his childhood is recorded in his "Confessions" as a proof of the profound impression made upon him by his mother's faith in spite of his father's Paganism, and also gives us a little insight into the difficulties of Monica's position. "I was still a child," writes St. Augustine, "when I was one day seized with a violent pain in the stomach. I felt choking, and every one thought I was going to die. Feeling myself in danger, I had but one wish, and that was to receive baptism. With the liveliest faith I implored it of my mother, of the Church, of

every one. I conjured them to hasten it. My mother was overwhelmed with fear, less for my body than for my soul. She flew to obtain for me this great grace. She pleaded for it with cries and tears." Strangely enough, God, as if satisfied with this ardent desire in the heart of both the mother and the son, suddenly removed the danger. The child got well, and the father, whom terror at the prospect of losing his boy had persuaded to allow the rite, now refused his consent; so that the baptism was delayed for twenty years. Monica submitted; in fact, she knew it was useless to insist; and as the Church tolerated the delay, she resigned herself to it in silence; only she redoubled her vigilant care over the soul of her boy; and that, if possible, no hostile influences might be brought to bear on his education, she used almost superhuman efforts to soften the hearts of the uncongenial inmates of her home. Her mother-in-law was the first to yield to this loving stratagem. Her

prejudices by degrees disappeared before the unalterable patience, sweetness, and respectful attentions of her daughter-in-law. "She recognised," says St. Augustine, "the falsehood of the calumnies set on foot by the servants, and exposed them to Patricius, who caused them, in consequence, to be severely chastised. After this punishment, the old lady publicly announced that whoever dared come to her with stories against her daughter-in-law would obtain a like recompense. From that moment not a word was said, and St. Monica lived ever after on most affectionate terms with her mother-in-law, no cloud ever arising to mar the understanding established between them."

The servants had held their tongues from fear; Monica determined to win them by love. She gained all their hearts, and saw herself ever after served with a fidelity and tenderness which her forbearing charity had justly earned.

And it was not only in her own family

that this holy influence made itself felt. She became the consoler and the peace-maker of the whole neighbourhood. Every-one came to tell her their troubles. She listened to each with a patience and a lov-ing gentleness which nothing ever seemed to ruffle, maintaining the most inviolable silence as to the secrets confided to her, and always contriving to say the right word at the right season. If she ever repeated the conversation of one person to another, it was to heal a wound and to allay a bitter or angry thought, so as to bring about a loving understanding between them. As she had been as a child, so she became as a woman, the angel of peace and the mi-nister of consolation to all that suffered. But dearer to her heart than all else was the conversion of her husband. He was a Pagan—she must bring him to God; he was a father—she must associate him in her work for her children. St. Augustine, speaking of this time, says: "I myself had then the gift of faith; so had everyone in

the house except my father. But he was never able to weaken in my mind the influence of my mother, which was so overpowering, from the force of her example, that he could not succeed in turning me away from a firm belief in the Saviour whom he ignored." And thus will it ever be between a believing mother and an unbelieving father; a child will never hesitate —he will follow his mother. May this thought give consolation to some hearts!

To attain her great end, Monica redoubled her attentions to her husband's wants and wishes, anticipating them, if possible, with a delicacy and minuteness which left him nothing to desire. Far cleverer and more gifted than himself, she strove to abase herself for him to the position of a servant, and if the sacrifices which her humility entailed on her were sometimes painful, she consoled herself by the greater liberty he, by degrees, allowed her with regard to the training of her boy. But with respect to their child, fresh trials

and difficulties soon arose for our saint. It was necessary to think of his education, and he was entrusted to the care of the ablest masters in Tagaste. One would have imagined that a genius like his would at once have developed itself, and that in this respect, at any rate, she would have nothing but satisfaction. It was quite the reverse. The little Augustine was intolerably idle and naughty. Learning to read and write, repeating over and over again, "one and one make two, two and two make four," seemed to him perfectly insupportable. His disgust at every kind of teaching seemed to increase day by day. His masters tried, by threats and punishments to force him to work. But these only had the effect of making him deceitful, while they redoubled his hatred of his lessons.

Monica, feeling that fear was not the proper incentive to a boy of his temperament, took him to some holy and saintlike priests, men of prayer, "Homines rogantes Te," as St. Augustine has it, so as to inspire him with

a higher motive for overcoming his repugnance to his studies. "I learnt from them," says St. Augustine, "that God was a being who would really come and help us in our need, and I prayed with my whole heart, child as I was, that He would help me and prevent my being so often whipped at school. I must own that my prayers were not always answered, and my father used to laugh at my floggings, which were a joke to him, but to me a source of continual pain and terror." Unfortunately, idleness was not Augustine's only fault. He added to it great pride, a passion for human praise, and an excessive love of every kind of gambling and questionable pleasure. The Pagan blood of his father seemed to boil in his veins, and threatened to overwhelm the Christian instincts implanted in him by his mother. It was at this very perilous moment, and at what seemed the turning-point in his life, that Monica found herself compelled to separate for the first time from her son. Tagaste

was a small place, and offered few advantages for education. Augustine, in spite of his faults, showed signs already of that brilliant genius, that quickness of perception, and that vivid imagination which, later, were to make him the wonder of his age, so Patricius resolved to make every sacrifice in order to give him a higher course of instruction. About six miles from Tagaste there was a city called by Ptolemy *Madaura*, famous for its schools, its intellectual culture, and its historical traditions. Its fine forum, enriched by statues of the gods, was surrounded by colleges. Here Patricius determined in the first instance to send his son, and here, accordingly, St. Monica left him, with the wise and loving counsels which mothers ever pour into their boys' hearts under similar circumstances, and without foreseeing the terrible havoc which sin and self-indulgence were soon to make in her child's soul. St. Augustine was then thirteen or fourteen. It was in 367. The intelligence of the

boy had begun to develop itself: his dislike to study vanished; Virgil, Homer, Cicero, and Ovid seemed to open a new world to him. Virgil especially produced upon him an extraordinary impression; he could not read of the sorrows of Dido without profound emotion. It was the custom of the school for the students to represent different scenes from Virgil and other classical poets, in prose, and the prize was awarded to the one who best awakened the passions of love, anger, or hatred in the spectators. St. Augustine excelled in this; he threw his whole soul into his acting, and not content with following the instructions of his masters, he frequented the theatres in order to learn the secret of passions which as yet he scarcely understood. The fatal poison once introduced, rapidly bore its pernicious fruits, and Augustine at fifteen was already deeply plunged in criminal pleasures which his natural reserve enabled him to conceal from the knowledge of others, but which had

the effect of utterly destroying the purity of his soul.

Patricius, enchanted with his son's successes, which in eloquence and rhetoric became every day more remarkable, resolved to make a still further sacrifice in order to send him to Carthage, where the famous library, and great competition of the university, promised to put the finishing touches to his genius; but to accomplish this, great economy and many privations for some time were necessary; so that towards the end of the year 369 Patricius brought his son home for a twelvemonth, that they might collect the money absolutely required for so long and expensive a journey. The joy of Monica at having her boy back again under her roof may be easily imagined. She knew nothing of the fatal change that had passed over him. He was most careful to conceal the passions which had begun to take entire possession of his heart, and she only saw him, his indolence overcome, the idol of both masters

and companions, who vied with one another in extolling his genius, and felt happy and proud (as what mother would not?) at the triumphs of her boy. If Augustine had had the courage to own his state of mind to his mother, the evil might have been averted; but as it was, the enforced idleness to which he found himself condemned, only gave the reins to his imagination, and kindled the flame which already smouldered in his heart. "I had but one dream at this time," says St. Augustine, "to love, and be loved." In the midst of it all, however, he was not happy. Sometimes his eyes would be opened to the depths of the precipice on which he was standing, and he would pray for chastity and purity; but an inward feeling made him add, "Not yet, not yet." It was impossible to conceive a more perilous position for a young man endued with such marvellous sensibility, whose passions had been fostered by bad books and bad examples, whose father was indifferent to all

religion or morality provided his son became a proficient in his studies; and who was deprived of all the religious helps so necessary to preserve innocence and tenderness of conscience in one on the verge of manhood. Yet Monica's work was not quite destroyed; the seed planted by God, and watered by a mother's tears, may remain dormant for years; the floods of passion and of sin may pass over it, but the day will come when it will revive again and put forth leaves, and bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

As if to prepare and console Monica for the terrible revelation which was soon to come upon her of her son's profligacy, Patricius at this very time began to show the first signs of an inclination to become a Christian. They had been married for seventeen years, and never during that time had Monica relaxed in her efforts insensibly to convert him. She had spoken little, never preached, loved much, and prayed always. Patricius, whose pride was for a

long time enlisted on the side of not yielding to the secret influence of his wife, at last announced to her his intention of abjuring Paganism, and asking to be admitted into the rank of catechumens. Monica's joy may be imagined. It was at the beginning of Lent, when Patricius, kneeling at the foot of the altar, received from the bishop the imposition of hands, on his forehead the cross, and on his lips the sacred salt (symbol of that incorruption of heart which the Christian was to keep evermore), which was the ceremony then used by the Christian Church for those about to enter on its novitiate. Had Patricius, after making up his mind to this first step, gone on to the second, and consented to receive at Easter the waters of baptism, Monica's happiness would have been complete. But he had not arrived at that stage. Each age has its perils and its temptations. In this fourth century, many men caused themselves to be inscribed on the lists of the Church as catechumens, who refused to do more,

either from false shame or because baptism would have constrained them to a life of greater purity and stricter practice; so that often it was delayed till the hour of death. In vain the bishops and fathers of the Church preached against this abuse. It existed for a long time; and Patricius fell into this snare of indifference, and was contented to remain at the portal of the Church for many years, until the prayers and tears of his wife brought him at last into the actual fold of Christ. Still, it was a step gained. At least he was no longer a Pagan; he believed in God. Although Monica had not yet the joy of seeing him kneel by her side at the holy table, he went with her to church; he assisted at the first part of the prayers; and she could see, as in a vision, the ultimate fulfilment of her hopes in that union of heart and soul in a common faith, without which marriage can be but a name.

While dwelling on these scenes in St. Monica's life, our thoughts naturally revert

to our own age and time. Which of us has not seen a young girl, pure and good, give her hand to one, either indifferent to all religion, or else perhaps hardened in evil, and has not trembled for the result? Five, ten years pass, and then the first step is taken. The man begins to pray. A little longer, and he is seen once more, with his wife, treading the church path by which his mother as a child had led him. Rarely indeed does his indifference outlive this gentle, loving influence. Ah! let no young girl forget the sublime part which God has assigned to her. Let her remember that to wield an angel's power she must have an angel's patience, fidelity, delicacy, tender and vigilant love, gentle silence, continual prayer. "The *rôle* of a Christian wife," says a charming writer, "resembles that of a guardian angel. She may lead the world, but by remaining, like him, invisible."

What impression was made on St. Augustine by his father's conversion is not

known, but it did not have any effect in arresting the course of his passions. Monica, believing him still innocent and still a child, was feeling altogether happier than she had been throughout her troubled married life, when an accident revealed to her the danger of her boy. Patricius had taken him to a party. What happened there it is not necessary to relate; but on his return he told everything to his wife, with a half-smile at the prospect of being a grandfather. But the very first word that he let slip filled Monica with unspeakable terror and dismay. Her boy was, then, become a man, with a man's passions; his innocence was gone! She sought her son, and with the utmost delicacy, yet with an emotion she could not altogether control, she tried to set before him the loathsomeness of vice, the peace and joy of a pure heart, and the horror which sins of this nature should inspire in the heart of a Christian. But her words had ceased to have the power of touching him. As he did

not know how to answer her, he began to avoid her: he could not stand her earnest, anxious look. In order to get out of her way, he spent whole days in hunting or in vile and unworthy pleasures. Plunged in a society more dissolute than himself, he took a pride in imitating them, and in pretending to be worse than he really was, from a kind of false shame and fear of ridicule but too common at that age.

Monica watched his gradual downfall with a sorrow which none but mothers know. Once she braved her natural repugnance to speak on the subject, and conjured him if he had no respect for himself or for her, at any rate to have some regard to the peace, and honour, and happiness of other families. But he had already begun to despise her words. This is what he himself says of his state of mind at that time: "My mother's words appeared to me only those of a woman who knew nothing of the world; and I should have blushed to have been led by them. Thus I despised her

gentle warnings, or rather I despised God, who was speaking to me through her." This last effort tore away the veil which had till then blinded poor Monica's eyes to the real state of things, and for the first time she felt the full anguish of a mother's sorrow. What bitter tears, what earnest prayers did she not offer up to God that He might protect and save the child whom her loving care was now powerless to shield from harm!

Yet, speaking of this time twenty-five years after, St. Augustine thought she had not done enough. "My mother was not sufficiently severe with me," he said. "She should have compelled me to give up my bad companions, and live quietly with her in the sanctity of our family life. As it was, she trusted to my studies raising me from the mire in which I was plunged, and so, unrestrained by any wholesome discipline or coercion, I gave free play to my vicious inclinations." Yet, in these days, we see mothers altogether shutting their eyes to their

boys' vices, palliating and excusing them, as "wild oats which must be sown," instead of vigorously exercising all the influence and powers which God has given them to arrest the evil and save them from a lifelong repentance.

Monica's one hope now was to get him away from Tagaste, with its pernicious idleness and evil influences; and yet she dreaded sending him alone to a city as corrupt as Carthage. Patricius, however, insisted. The money necessary for his journey and for the prosecution of his studies had been raised, and so, towards the end of the year 370, St. Moncia took him herself to place him in the college, and left him with loving counsels indeed, but with more anxious fears than she had ever yet known.

Carthage was, at that time, one of the first cities in the empire, yielding in importance neither to Antioch nor Alexandria. With a fine port, recently fortified by Augustus, handsome quays, fine broad streets watered by fountains, magnificent

temples and theatres, and markets in which were displayed all the richest stuffs and produce of the East, Carthage likewise rivalled Rome in education and the fine arts. Its university was thronged with students from every part of the empire. The schools were distinguished by long white banners floating over the doors; and there were classes for rhetoric, philosophy, grammar, languages, and every conceivable science. The students themselves, though often remarkable for brilliant talents and abilities, had the reputation of great license in manners and customs, so much so, that they received the nickname of "*Eversores*" (or upsetters of everything). Their studies being over in the morning, they crowded in the afternoon to the circus, where combats of gladiators and wild beasts still further excited their ardent natures, so that nightly rows were the consequence.

This was the atmosphere into which St. Augustine was introduced, with his vivid imagination, his hot passions, and his im-

patience of control. His first appearance in the schools made a great sensation. He was already master of several languages, had a singular aptitude for philosophy and metaphysics, a passion for study, a fine taste for poetry and painting, and all that was most beautiful in nature or in art; above all, a wonderful eloquence, which electrified his hearers. The most brilliant future was, consequently, prophesied for him in the schools; and he became as much the idol of the masters as of the students. What added to his singular charm was a certain timidity and reserve which belong to fine natures, and which are at once the index and the accompaniment of real genius. Still, this modest manner concealed an ambition and a vanity on which, later in his "Confessions," he dilates with his accustomed humility. But his pride was his least defect. The inordinate passions which consumed him found vent at last in a *liaison*, which he formed with one whose name he has concealed, but who, for fifteen

years, captivated him heart and soul; who followed him in all his future wanderings, and from whom he never parted until, on the eve of his conversion, she quitted him to devote herself likewise entirely to the service of God. This terrible secret came to the ears of Monica in 372, when Augustine became a father; and the gifted and brilliant boy (whom, hereafter, Augustine would only denominate as "the fruit of his sin") received from his then infatuated parent the name of *Adeodatus*, "Dieu-donné." Monica's despair and sorrow at this confirmation of her worst anticipations were so great that, at first, fears were entertained for her life. Even in public she could not restrain her tears. The Church has instituted on the 4th of May a festival in her honour, which might be called the "Feast of Tears" of a Christian mother. The whole office is imbued with that sad tone.* But she

* 1. Flebat et orabat assidue pia Parens super filium, per quem Dominus impiorum capita conquassavit.

2. Beata Mater, quæ implevit desiderium suum, dum

had one consolation, she no longer wept *alone*. Patricius, won by her noble example and tender piety, had become a Christian in deed and in truth; and the tie between the husband and wife, once so cold, was now changed into a mutual devotion, arising from tenderness on the one hand, and gratitude on the other, producing a love which has no name this side of heaven. Few particulars are known of the death of Patricius. Soon after he had received the sacrament of Baptism he fell sick, and after several months of suffering, during which time he was nursed day and night by the angel guardian whom God had given him in his wife, he slept in Christ. To Monica the sorrow was deep and poignant. She remembered

pro salute filii plorans jugiter rogaret Dominum, exaudisti eam nec despexisti lacrymas ejus, cum profluentes rigarent terram.

3. Hæc est illa vere flens Vidua, quæ filium diu et amare deflevit.

4. Elevaverunt flumina lacrymarum, Domine, per sanctam matrem, elevaverunt flumina vocem suam.

5. Flebat uberrimis lacrymis, etc. etc.—*Brev. Rom. Aug.* 4 *Maii.*

neither his faults nor his cruelties. She thought but of the soul she had saved, and which was just beginning to understand and enter into her own; and in the tomb which she prepared for him she reserved a place for herself, so that she should never be separated from him to whom she had been for so many years the faithful and devoted spouse. Thus did God console His servant, so that she might not be altogether crushed by the misconduct of her son. At each step that Augustine had made towards evil, Patricius had made one towards good; and so shall we ever see in her history. Alongside of the sorrow there came the consolation; for the true source of her grief was her boundless love for her Saviour, who, in His tender mercy, compensated to her for her riven heart, by filling it with Himself.

CHAPTER II.

THE first work confided by God to St. Monica was accomplished. It had taken her seventeen years, and she was then thirty-nine years of age; but she had still a work to do (taking up, curiously enough, exactly the same space of time), before she would be permitted to enter into her rest.

It is a curious fact that almost all the great female saints have survived their husbands. St. Monica, St. Paula, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Hedwige, St. Ida, St. Françoise de Chantal, and a host of others. They pass through the marriage state, and enter into its joys as if to teach the world how to enjoy them with holiness and purity, and then God takes away the desire of their

eyes with a stroke, as if He were jealous of their love, and claimed their whole hearts; and perhaps, also, because their souls needed the purification of great suffering to raise them to the higher paths in which He had called them to walk. It seems also that the happier their married lives are, the sooner they are bidden to relinquish them. St. Elizabeth was only twenty, St. Hedwige twenty-three, St. Chantal twenty-nine, when God dashed the cup of earthly happiness from their lips. St. Monica was older; but then her married life had been crowned with thorns. No sooner had she begun to taste its sweetness than she became a widow. And yet, hardly had the grave closed upon Patricius, when Monica's spirit rose to higher flights of sanctity and heroism. It is not known whether or not St. Monica received from the bishop the widow's dress and consecrated veil which the Church accorded to those who, devoting their lives henceforth to God, were employed in various sacred ministrations. Perhaps her fear

of not being altogether free to fly to the side of her boy when necessary prevented her making this solemn dedication of herself. But it is certain that, partly out of love for the memory of her husband, and partly from a higher motive, she made a vow that her life in future should belong solely to God. St. Augustine, writing of her at this time, compares her to one of the widows of whom St. Paul speaks, who "widows indeed, and desolate," continued in prayer day and night, devoting themselves to the care of the sick and the suffering, and filling up the void which earthly affection had left by the love of Jesus Christ, henceforth their only spouse.

Such was the life of the widowed Monica; and to the mourning which she always wore was added the deeper mourning of a mother who sees her son perishing before her eyes without any power of saving him but by her prayers and self-immolation. She had never cared for worldly pleasures, but now she determined to renounce them altogether.

Dressed with that austere simplicity which becomes a woman whose life in the world has ended, she added the severest mortifications. Her life was one continual fast. Her love for the poor, so long restrained, burst forth in the most energetic, practical, and devoted service. Her greatest happiness was to visit the sick in the hospitals, or in their homes, to dress their wounds, to relieve their wants, and to watch day and night by the bedsides of those suffering members of her Lord. To these labours she added the laying out of their bodies after death, a custom then universally practised by Christian widows, however rich and noble, who thought it no disparagement to their rank to wash themselves those bodies so lately the temples of the Holy Ghost, and to prepare them with tender and reverent care for sepulture. Then she would accompany them to their last resting-place, and cause prayers to be said for their souls. But one work above all others was dear to her heart, and that was the care of orphan

children. She watched over them with maternal tenderness, brought them up as her own, and taught them, above all, those principles of faith which they could no longer learn at their mother's knee. She daily brought children to God, that God might one day give her back her own. When will a mother's instinct be at fault?

But she had still another great mission: it was that of consoling not only widows but married women. Many think of the first, few of the second; and yet none often have to bear deeper wounds, the more bitter because secret: with a smile on their lips, they have death in their hearts. How many homes are there in which love is not; or if it have once existed, where it has been replaced by indifference, or neglect, and the ashes of past joys! How many people whom the world envies bear in their souls a sword, piercing through and through, however sheathed from human sight! St. Monica knew it all by experience, and so with inexpressible gentleness,

with exquisite delicacy, and with that wonderful intuition which charity gives, she succeeded in soothing, strengthening, and healing those sad and breaking hearts in a way which was almost miraculous. In her conversation she never let slip any word which could wound the most susceptible. Charity ever characterised her gentle loving spirit, and years after her death it was said of her, that no one could remember having heard her utter a syllable which did not teem with that ardent faith and love with which her whole heart was filled.

Such was Monica's life; and as, even in the exercise of charity, physical weariness will sometimes supervene, she sought day by day that rest and refreshment which the presence of our Lord in His tabernacle can alone afford. Morning and evening, in the little church of Tagaste, was she to be seen, kneeling in the selfsame corner as she had done as a child, absorbed in prayer and adoration, with a mingled expression of sorrow and hope on the pale and beautiful

face ever fixed on the altar, and drawing from thence stores of comfort and courage and strength for her sad and arduous duties. She communicated daily at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, when she was often favoured with great and special graces. She had the tenderest devotion for the saints and martyrs, performing pilgrimages at their tombs, and offering, according to the custom of those times, bread and wine on their altars at all the anniversaries of their feasts. But of all religious mysteries the one which most sensibly affected her was that of the passion of our Lord; the very sight of the crucifix filled her with emotion; and, on one particular occasion, while meditating on this miracle of suffering Divinity, God overwhelmed her with such a flood of light and of love, that her tears compelled her to leave the church.* This is almost the only event in her religious life which has

* This fact is alluded to in the following hymn :—

O matrona gratiosa,
Quam transfigunt amorosa
Crucifixi stigmata;

not been buried in obscurity. It would seem as if God wished to hide from us her noble existence as daughter, wife, servant of the poor, or contemplative, to reveal her to us solely as a *mother*.

In this quality she became greater day by day. The death of Patricius had left her in a position of great pecuniary embarrassment. Not that she dreaded poverty for herself, but she could not bear that, for want of means, Augustine's education should be cut short, and a boy of his powers and intellect thrown back on the idle, listless life of one living at home in a small provincial town. Sooner than expose him to a risk like this, she resolved to impose on herself the hardest sacrifices. Augustine at this time not only realised but surpassed the expectations of his masters. To brilliant intellect and wonderful eloquence, he added a knowledge of metaphysics

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His accensa sic ploravit
Lacrymis quod irrigavit
Pavimenti schemata.—*Hymn. Sanctæ Monic.*

and a power of grasping subjects considered almost beyond the teaching of the schools, which amazed the professors, and often left them far behind him in the race. His manner and exterior corresponded with his rare talents; of the middle height, and of a nervous, frail, and delicate temperament (so often the portion of chosen souls, as remarks St. Gregory Nazianzen), he had that simple dignity, modesty, and reserve which characterise the possessor of great gifts; while his profound tenderness of heart and exquisite sensibility made him irresistible in persuasion, and added an indefinable charm to his natural elegance and distinction.* To bury a youth of such promise in an obscure home seemed unbearable; yet with all her privations,

* In a very old portrait, which is preserved at Milan, taken at this time, St. Augustine is thus represented:—"È vestito in una forma veramente propria o di quei tempi o per lo meno de' paesi dell' Africa: nè è molto dissimile da quella che anco ne' nostri giorni si costuma generalmente in Levante. Il colore è vermiglio tendente al fosco; la fronte stesa; lo sguardo penetrante sì, ma dolce e sospeso; la struttura del corpo ristretta e gentile."

Monica felt, day by day, the impossibility of finding the necessary resources for his college life. Still, her faith did not fail; she hoped and prayed; and God rewarded her simple trust in His Providence by putting it into the heart of one of the richest citizens of Tagaste, named Romanianus, to come forward and offer to defray the expenses of the young Augustine's education. He did more: he offered him a room in his own house in Carthage, so as to put him completely at his ease; and this generosity was accompanied with a delicacy and nobleness of spirit which prevented his feeling the weight of the obligation. To the heart of Monica this double boon became a source of never-failing gratitude; and when, later, Romanianus had a son, whom he named Licentius, exposed to the difficulties and temptations which so often beset boys in a brilliant position, Monica watched over him with a tenderness and vigilance which knew no bounds, as if, by being a mother to Licentius, she would

repay Romanianus for having been a second father to Augustine.

Free from all anxiety as to the education and future of her son, Monica now urged him more and more to follow that higher course of science and philosophy, which, with a kind of presentiment, she felt would eventually bring him to the knowledge of God. The "Hortensius" of Cicero, which she then put into his hands, seemed for a time to revive in his heart that love for what is noble and good, that thirst for wisdom, and that contempt for the world, which are always inherent in great minds. But, after a time, Augustine became dissatisfied with this ardent pursuit of the philosophy of the ancients. He was discouraged at the uncertainty and contradictions of their various systems. Everywhere he seemed to be searching for light, and found nothing but flashes here and there—half-truths, fragments of knowledge—but nothing certain, conclusive, or sure. He was as a man following a shadow, which

always eluded his tangible grasp; or as one dying of thirst, pursuing vainly the mirage lake of the desert. Another thing disappointed him. He found a beautiful theory, in which God and truth and order were ranged side by side; but one thing was wanting, and that was the Saviour. "That name of Jesus Christ," he says in the third book of his "Confessions," "I had drunk it in with my mother's milk. It had remained ever in the depths of my soul, so that the tenderest fibres of my nature remained untouched." Here again we see the mother's work: the heart of her child, once touched by the chords of that love, would never vibrate again but at the sacred name.

Dissatisfied with these studies, therefore, St. Augustine turned once more to the Holy Scriptures. But the time was not yet come. To understand the Gospel, is granted but to the humble, the simple, the pure in heart. Augustine, in his intellectual pride, despised the form in which

its sublime truths are clothed; and after reading a few pages, closed the book in disgust. A few years were yet to pass before that same man, touched at last by the grace of God, should reopen that self-same book, and shed over one of its passages those floods of tears which have, more than his genius, immortalised his name. But the time was not yet; and Monica had still to wait, till her prayers and tears had done their work in softening the stony soil, that the seed sown might bring forth fruit.

There existed at this time a sect called the Manichean, whose doctrines were mingled with Persian, Chaldean, and Egyptian theories; and, like all heresies, had a powerful effect on young and earnest minds, from the prospect it professed to hold out of a complete social reform. It had also the charm of mystery, for it was a secret society; and its members claimed as their charter the liberty of private judgment, rejecting all appeal to authority or discipline.

What more tempting to a spirit like Augustine's, proud of his intellect, thirsting for truth, but wishing to find it in his own way; a victim to his passions, and thankful to find a system which, with an apparently high moral standard, yet dispensed him from the need of repentance or confession? Augustine fell into the snare; and, disregarding the warnings of the Church or the advice of his mother, from whom he carefully concealed his intention, he publicly apostatised from the faith, and had his name inscribed among the number of the auditors, which was the first step of initiation into the sect. With the zeal and enthusiasm of a convert, he devoted all the energies of his mind and heart to winning others over to what he considered truth. His ascendency over his friends had been always extraordinary; it was enough to know him, to love and follow him, if possible, to the ends of the earth. What wonder then that Romanianus, his benefactor, Alypus, Honoratus, Nebridius,

and a host of others, whose devotion to him was only equalled by their profound admiration for his talents, were rapidly seduced by him into the like errors? St. Monica could scarcely believe the terrible news when the relations of these his friends came to her in despair with the tidings of their apostasy, owing to the influence and example of her son. The long vacation was beginning. Augustine was to return home; and Monica waited, with an agony which mothers only can estimate, for a confirmation of her worst fears. But when Augustine had arrived, and, with the pride of heresy, burst forth at once against the authority of the Church, Monica's spirit was fairly roused. Mingling reproaches with her tears, she ordered him to leave her house, and never again to set foot in it till by humility and submission he had atoned for his fault. A command of this nature was not to be resisted; and Augustine, quitting his mother's roof, took up his abode in the house of Romanianus. To

estimate the heroism of this act on Monica's part, we must recollect not only her passionate devotion to her boy, and his great and singular charm, but his strong personal affection for herself, which made the rupture the more intolerable to her mother's heart. But her love of God and of His truth triumphed over all natural feelings: she saw our Lord outraged by her son's acts; and, to vindicate His honour, crushed every human weakness. Her grief, however, was so profound that she seemed as one dead; and, when the effort had been made, and the last echo of Augustine's receding footsteps had died away, the broken-hearted mother cast herself at the foot of the cross, and there, with an agony too deep for tears, implored the Divine aid and guidance in her terrible need. This prayer was heard and answered. That very night, when, worn out by contending emotions, she was sleeping the sleep of pure exhaustion, she had a dream thus described by St. Augustine. "She appeared

to be standing on a plank of wood, sadly and alone, when a youth of bright and glistening aspect approached her, and asked her the cause of her sorrow. She replied, that she wept for the loss of her son. 'Do not be troubled,' he replied, gaily; 'see, he is here, by your side.' She looked behind her, and saw him standing on the same plank." This vision gave her the hope and consolation she so much needed. She repeated it to St. Augustine, who knew his mother too well to doubt her sincerity for an instant, but who tried to interpret her dream in his own sense, and said that it meant *she* would join *him*. "No, no!" exclaimed St. Monica; "the angel did not say, 'Where he is, you will be,' but, '*he will be where you are.*'"*

It was about this time that Augustine left Carthage, and during the two years which were to elapse before he was old enough to be called to the bar, he opened

* "Non, inquit, non enim mihi dictum est: 'Ubi ille et tu;' sed, 'Ubi tu et ille.'"—*Confess.* lib. iii. cap. xi.

a school of grammar and rhetoric at Tagaste. As, unfortunately, he did not come *alone*, he accepted Romanianus's offer of a house in the town, where he lived during the whole course of his teaching. But he came to see his mother daily; for, in spite of his heresy, he was always the most devoted and respectful of sons. Between them there never were any religious discussions. Each avoided them with care; Augustine, out of respect for his mother; Monica, because she hoped more from prayer than from controversy. But, on the other hand, she never missed an occasion of inciting men of weight and ability to enter the lists with her son, always hoping that, through their means, he might some day be brought to see the force and beauty of Catholic truth. One day, particularly, she heard of the arrival at Tagaste of a very learned and saintlike bishop, who had himself passed through the Manichean heresy, and had an intimate knowledge of Holy Scriptures. She flew to find him,

and related to him all her difficulties, imploring him to come to her aid. But the bishop, an adept in the discernment of character, shook his head, saying, the time was not yet come, that her son was too freshly embarked in this heresy, and therefore too full of vanity and presumption to be disposed to listen. "Leave him alone," he added; "only pray a great deal." To console her, for Monica was crying bitterly, he told her his own story. He had been brought up as a Manichee by his mother, whom that heresy had perverted; grown older, he began to translate Manichean works, and this labour, without controversy or argument, opened his eyes to the truth, by showing him the fallacy of their arguments and the weakness of their ground. "Thus," he added, "it will be with your son, he will find out the folly of this heresy for himself." And as Monica, who would not believe him, went on imploring him with tears to see Augustine and try to convince him, the venerable bishop, touched

by her importunity, exclaimed, "Go in peace. *It cannot be that the son of such tears should perish.*"* This word touched Monica to the quick. It seemed to have come direct from heaven. She returned home strengthened, encouraged, and consoled. In this noble thought we seem to see two things: first, that it is impossible to the eye of faith that earnest prayers offered by man to God should not be heard and answered in His own time and way; that if one prayer above all others reaches the ear of God, it is that of a mother for her child; and secondly, that it is equally impossible that the child of such a mother should be lost, for in his heart she must have breathed some portion of the fire and love which consumes her own, and implanted in his breast that imperishable conscience which, though now it may sleep, will one day wake and speak with an irresistible force.

* 'Vade, fieri non potest ut filius istarum lacrymarum pereat.'—*Confess.* lib. iii. cap. xii.

Christian mothers! you, whose sons are breaking your hearts by their wild and evil courses, do not be discouraged. Under the burning lava of their passions there still remains the little seed you have planted in their childhood; the spark of faith remains, though covered over for the time by cold and apparently dead ashes. The souls of your children are like vases of alabaster which have once contained a sweet and precious perfume, and which retain a portion of the delicious aroma even after being profaned by a thousand viler uses. Only for this, you must labour; you must weep; you must pray; you must accuse, not Heaven, but yourselves; you must smite your breasts and weep that you have not yet wept enough: and be assured that your prodigal sons will be restored to you in that day when you shall have filled up the measure of those sufferings which win from God the redemption of your children.

Two years had nearly elapsed in the conscientious discharge of his functions as

professor, when an event occurred which gave, as it were, the first shake to that edifice of security in which Augustine had been living, regardless of the future, or only thinking of it as of a probably brighter cast than the present. This was the death of one of his most intimate friends, of his intense affection for whom he speaks in his "Confessions" in these terms, "Non poterat anima mea sine illo." Seized with fever, and unconscious, this young man received, while in that state, the sacrament of Baptism. Augustine, who never left his bedside, began, during his lucid intervals, to ridicule the ceremony, in which the Manicheans professed to disbelieve; but, to his utter astonishment, his dying friend, hitherto so submissive to his teachings, and whom he had himself perverted, indignantly repulsed his impious suggestions, and with a holy boldness commanded entire silence on that point. St. Augustine, surprised at his vehemence, desisted, reserving the discussion to the period of his friend's con-

valescence; but God preserved him from such a peril by death, and Augustine, returning a short time after to his room, found that all was over. His sorrow and despair were overwhelming. No religious consolation was at hand to lighten the burden of his grief. The sight of other people going on as usual, full of their business or their pleasures—a sight ever trying to the heart that mourns—filled him with indignation as well as anguish. How could they be just the same when, to him, all the world was darkened? The house where they had lived and worked together became insupportable to him; he could no longer occupy himself; he passed his days and nights in tears. At last his friends, seriously alarmed for his health, which this constant grief was undermining, advised him to quit Tagaste for a time and return to Carthage. Monica, though filled with sorrow and anxiety at the idea, still urged his departure, feeling that his life depended on the change, and hoping also

that in the great school of sorrow he would learn that lesson of the vanity of human joys and human hopes which sinks so deep in a riven heart. Augustine returned, therefore, to the seat of his former scholastic triumphs, and, in order to forget his grief, plunged deeper into study, especially of mathematics and physics. Strange to say, this study, for the first time, implanted doubts in his mind as to the truth of the Manichean heresy. Certain absurd and unprovable theories which Manes had introduced into his religious system with regard to astronomy and physical laws, startled Augustine, and made him enquire into the grounds of his belief in the rest. The result was a deep and growing anxiety as to whether he might not have been altogether deceived and misled. His Manichean friends, in order to quiet him, sent for one of their bishops named Faustus, a man of great eloquence, and with a peculiar charm of manner which at once fascinated Augustine and riveted his

attention. Monica, who had watched the struggle going on in her son's mind, redoubled her prayers, her penances, and her tears at the sight of this fresh danger; and God overruled all according to her desire, by making Augustine see the superficial character of Faustus's instruction, and the impossibility of having his doubts and difficulties cleared up by this means. His personal admiration of the bishop continued, but his confidence in him as a guide vanished for ever, and with it the Manichean illusions which had so long blinded his understanding to the truth. "O my God!" he exclaimed, in his "Confessions," "if, at this critical moment, Thou didst not abandon me, it was because of the tears with which my mother pleaded for me day and night, and of the sacrifice of her heart's blood for my salvation."

It is beautiful to trace Monica's conduct during these nine terrible years; first, the righteous indignation which banished Augus-

tine from her roof; then the almost superhuman efforts she made to draw him from his errors; and at the greatest crisis of all, when she saw, as in a vision, truth and falsehood contending like good and bad angels for the soul of her son, the supreme sacrifice of herself, accepted by God, whereby, though far away, she was able to protect and save him. What a revelation is this to us of what a mother can and should accomplish!

But, free as Augustine now was from the trammels of the heresy which had so long enthralled him, he had not yet finally decided on his course; his eyes were not yet opened, nor his will moulded to the will of God. Dissatisfied with himself, and in consequence with all around him, he wrote to his mother and announced to her his intention of quitting Carthage, and establishing himself at Rome. To Monica this intelligence brought unmixed terror. Rome in those days was the hotbed of Paganism and vice. It required a man of confirmed

faith and sober judgment to stand his ground at all in an atmosphere where everything conspired to ruin and seduce him. Monica's decision was therefore quickly made. If Augustine was bent on going, she would accompany him, and endeavour, by giving him the shelter of a holy home, to save him, as far as in her lay, from the perils with which he would be surrounded.

But this did not come into Augustine's calculations. He was determined to go, and to go *alone*. He was then thirty years of age; though he still loved his mother, he had lost the tenderness of his boyhood towards her, and the time was not yet come when, disappointed and wearied with the world, the heart of the son would fly back to her as to the ever faithful haven of rest and of unselfish, undying love; which would raise his affection almost to a worship, and to a trembling consciousness of the very few years the untold blessing would yet be granted to him.

So Augustine continued his preparations

for departure; but they were not rapid enough; for the day before his intended embarkation, Monica appeared at Carthage, and, throwing her arms round his neck, implored him either to give up Rome or to take her with him. To quiet her, Augustine promised to remain; telling her he would only accompany a friend (who was starting on the same voyage) to see him off in the vessel, and then return to her. In thus lying to his mother, Augustine flattered himself she would remain in the town, and would allow him to go off quietly with his friend to the harbour. But she would not leave him, and accompanied him to the seashore.

It was towards evening; a fearful storm had been raging for several days, and the contrary wind prevented the sailing of the ship, which was still at anchor in the port. While waiting for the change, which the sailors predicted that night, the two friends walked up and down on the shore, and Monica with them, both the young men

very much embarrassed by her company. At last, it got quite dark, and as there seemed no prospect of the departure of the vessel, Monica was persuaded to seek a place of shelter and repose. There was a little chapel on the shore dedicated to St. Cyprian, of which the ruins are still visible. Here St. Monica consented to retire, and spend the night in prayer: and strangely did God seem to answer that petition; for, in a few hours, the wind changed, the anchor was weighed, and St. Augustine, sitting on the poop of the vessel, saw his native shores recede from his view; while his mother, leaving the chapel in the morning, sought in vain for traces either of her son or of the ship; and, almost wild with grief, which her boy's deception had so greatly embittered, she wandered up and down the shore, giving vent to her agony in tears and cries which would have melted the sternest heart. Yet, in God's inscrutable decrees, this very voyage to Italy was to accomplish that which was the desire of her heart, and

the object of her prayers. So true is it that we must "pray in faith, nothing wavering," and never be discouraged, though all should appear contrary to us; knowing that the promises of God are sure, and that He will accomplish them in His own time and way.

CHAPTER III.

MONICA returned, broken-hearted, to Tagaste, where, as is touchingly said by her biographer, "Tears every day marked the place in church where she knelt to pray for her erring boy." In the meantime, Augustine arrived safely at Rome, and took up his abode in the house of a Manichean friend. But there, whether less precautions were taken before him or from other causes, the whole corruption and scandalous orgies of the sect became known to him, and so revolted his purer and higher nature, that he at once broke with them, then and for ever. This was a great step; but he was not yet to find peace. The Catholic Church at Rome was at that time governed by St. Damasus,

whose secretary, St. Jerome, was filling the world with his eloquence. A council had been summoned by the Holy Pope to discuss some of the grave questions which then, as now, agitated men's minds; and St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, St. Valerian of Aquila, Paul of Antioch, and a host of other learned and venerable fathers, had hastened to answer to the appeal. Side by side with these pillars of the Church, were the twin-sisters, Virginity and Charity, sprung from the foot of Calvary, who were to continue to the end to give the world the example of a religion of which the watchword was Love. Women of the highest rank and of the gentlest blood were seen then, as now, tending the sick, succouring the orphan, comforting the widow, instructing the poor; and round St. Jerome were grouped that noble band of widows, St. Paula, Fabiola, Eustochia, Marcella, and the like, trained by him to a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice which has made them an example

to all succeeding ages. Had Augustine chosen to look into these things, he would have been the first to sympathise and admire. But there are seasons in men's lives when "their eyes are blinded that they see not." Augustine was so fully persuaded that the Catholic Church taught doctrines not only absurd in themselves, but subversive of liberty and incompatible with human reason, that he never so much as gave its study a thought. Disgusted both with the reasonings of the schools and the vagaries of the sect to which he had belonged, he made up his mind to believe in *nothing*. This decision, however, was far from giving him consolation. His spirit was too upright to be satisfied with it, and a profound melancholy came over him which he tried in vain to dispel. Soon after, he caught the Roman fever, and in a few days his life was despaired of. "O my God!" he exclaims in his "Confessions," speaking of that time, "if I had died then, where would have been my soul? But here

again I was preserved by my mother's prayers. Never can I describe what her love for me was; and Thou, O my God! Thou didst not permit me to die in my impenitence, lest her mother's heart should have been so deeply wounded that no healing could have reached it." St. Augustine recovered, and recommenced his work; but he did not recover his tranquillity of mind. The dissolute character of the majority of the students who formed his classes, revolted his delicacy; and the chair of rhetoric at Milan falling vacant, he entered himself as a candidate, and having received the appointment, after a public trial, in which he was loaded with honours and applause, he left Rome for Milan in the year 385.

St. Monica had for a long time felt an increase of anxiety and distress at the melancholy tone of Augustine's letters; and at last came to the resolution that she would rejoin him, at whatever cost. In those days such a journey for a woman

was attended with endless difficulties. She was obliged also to sell almost all she possessed to meet the expense. But what hardships or privations can stand in the way of a mother's love? She embarked, therefore, from the same port which had witnessed her hour of misery two years before. Hardly had she set sail, when a frightful tempest came on. The hearts of all failed for fear; the very sailors gave up hope. Monica alone, strong in faith and purpose, consoled and cheered them one by one, and by her calmness and courage succeeded in allaying their fears. They arrived safely at Civita Vecchia, and Monica flew on to Rome. What was her dismay at finding her son already gone! The letters in which he had announced to her his success and departure for Milan had never reached her, and at first her disappointment seemed almost too keen to bear. But she was not a woman to give up a plan which she had once deliberately conceived. Milan is two hundred leagues

distant from Rome, and to arrive at it one must traverse the Apennines; but as the dangers of the sea had not appalled, so neither did the fatigues nor perils of the land deter her. So, after a day's rest, she started off again in pursuit of her child, with that indomitable faith which saw no obstacle in the path of duty.

And it was well that she persevered, for the moment was at hand when God had decreed that she was to receive her consolation. It was at Milan that Augustine was to emerge from darkness into light, and it was fitting that his mother should be there. She had been present at his death; it was just she should be likewise present at his resurrection.

The episcopal chair at Milan at that time was filled by St. Ambrose; and it seemed as if he had been sent there on purpose to guide, direct, and enlighten the troubled spirit of Augustine. Like him, he had passed his youth in the world, had devoted himself to the study of eloquence,

and gained celebrity at the bar; had been blessed with a mother of singular holiness, and yet remained a catechumen until the age of thirty. Then an unexpected event changed his whole career. The bishopric of Milan fell vacant. Two parties disputed the election, with an animosity which threatened bloodshed. Ambrose, as prefect of the town, came to the church to quell the disorder. He addressed the people with a moving eloquence, which began to have its effect, when a child's voice exclaimed, "Let Ambrose be our bishop!" This innocent voice appeared to the disputants like a voice from heaven, and Ambrose, in spite of his tears and protestations, was unanimously elected to the vacant episcopal chair. After eight days of solitude and prayer he was consequently ordained priest, and immediately afterwards, bishop. Then, as a flower expands in the sun, did the noble character of Ambrose burst forth with the laying on of hands. He became the marvel of his age. The

wisest of statesmen and the holiest of bishops; one day rebuking emperors and kings with holy boldness, and the same night spending hours in the confessional or in humble penances for the sins of his flock; vindicating in council the doctrines of the Church at one moment, and the next pouring out his whole soul in pious hymns of praise (which he has left as a heritage to Catholics of all ages), this wonderful man became the instrument for the conversion of one who was to take place by his side on the altars of the Church.

One of the first visits paid by St. Augustine at Milan was to St. Ambrose. He owed it to his position, having been appointed to a professorial chair in his episcopal see; but he was also attracted to him by that wonderful sympathy which unites kindred souls. St. Ambrose received him with joy and with the most paternal kindness; and from that moment Augustine loved him as a son. However necessary Monica's presence at this moment might

be to Augustine's conversion, it would not have sufficed alone. What the mother begins with tears, and love, and prayers, the priest completes with the authority, the word, and the blood of Jesus Christ; and so it was needful that the two should labour hand in hand in the great work to which God's Holy Spirit was to give the increase. Not content with seeing St. Ambrose privately, St. Augustine determined to go and hear him preach, which he did every Sunday, on the Holy Scriptures, avoiding controversy, and making use of fine and ingenious allegories, with which he threw light on the more obscure passages of Holy Writ. This was the very method to please and soothe the sick soul of Augustine, who abandoned himself to the pleasure of hearing him without restraint, little suspecting the effect this simple and touching eloquence would have on his future life. Yet, convinced as he was that there could be no truth in the Catholic Church, these very sermons made him the more despairing.

He saw the folly of all other systems, but as yet he could not believe in the Church of God.

It was at this moment of cruel doubt and uncertainty that Monica arrived; and great was the joy of both mother and son at their reunion. One never values family affection so much as when in sadness or sorrow; and Augustine was in a state of mind which sorely needed a mother's soothing hand. As soon as they were alone together, he told her he had ceased to be a Manichean, expecting to see her filled with joy at the news. But she said nothing. It was not enough for her that he had given up heresy; she wanted to see him a fervent Catholic; and gaining boldness from his renewed confidence, she spoke to him strongly, and openly expressed her convictions that before her death she would have the joy of seeing him united with her in faith and hope. Augustine shook his head, and answered only by a bitter smile. But Monica was not discouraged. She knew her son too

well to imagine he would ever remain satisfied with a negative religion. Her first idea after having embraced her boy, was to find St. Ambrose, and to pour into his loving, fatherly heart all her fears, anxieties, and hopes for him. St. Ambrose received her with a joy mingled with emotion. His previous admiration for her saintlike character was enhanced by personal knowledge, so that he never saw Augustine afterwards without congratulating him on having such a mother. On the other hand, St. Monica found in St. Ambrose all that she had ever dreamed of or hoped for in a director for her son; and a mutual affection and veneration sprang up between them, of which the link was the precious soul, the fate of which seemed still to hang in the balance. It must also be remembered that Monica had only two more years to live—two years, during which Divine Providence gave her the help and guidance of this great saint, in order to bring her soul into still higher paths of perfection. Her one

thought was still the same—to pray, and weep, and sacrifice herself for her boy; and if she watched more diligently over her own conduct, if she became still more careful of every idle word or thought, and grew day by day in humility, recollection, and self-abnegation, it was still on account of her boy; so that her prayers might be more pure, that her heart, more closely united with God, might send forth a cry which would at last find acceptance with Him. And who so well as St. Ambrose knew how to deal with a soul like hers, and to give it the direction needed to attain the desired end?

The intimacy once established between Augustine and the holy bishop, Monica left no stone unturned to promote and increase it, either by taking him with her when she visited the Episcopal Palace, or by sending him on various pretexts to ask for his advice for herself, and thus give him an occasion of entering into conversation with him. One day, for instance, she did not know

what to do about the Saturday's fast. It was observed in Africa and in Rome; it was not observed in Milan. She sent St. Augustine to enquire, and received these words in answer, which have since become a rule to Catholics: "Follow the custom of the Church where you are. If you are at Rome, fast with the Church of Rome; but if you are at Milan, do not fast when the Church of Milan does not do so."

To the love and veneration she entertained for St. Ambrose, she added a tender and profound obedience. This was tested soon after her arrival in Milan, when St. Monica went, according to the custom of the African Church, to offer bread, wine, and meats on the altar of the saint whose festival was that day celebrated. St. Ambrose sent the porter to stop her, and refused her permission to enter the church with her basket, this rite having been lately forbidden at Milan, in consequence of the abuses which had arisen from the practice. Monica, to whom this prohibition was

quite new, might have been hurt and mortified at this abrupt refusal of her gifts, and still more at being publicly stopped in church. But not a trace of vexation or mortification could be seen on her countenance. Meekly bowing her head, she obeyed without a word, and swiftly leaving the church, distributed the contents of her basket among the poor, and then returned to feed herself on the body of her Lord.

A moment of grave crisis had arrived for the Church at Milan, which strengthened Augustine's affection for the bishop, by awakening all that was generous, chivalrous, and enthusiastic in his disposition. The Empress Justinia, surrounded by a clique of Arian courtiers, had sent to St. Ambrose at Easter to desire that one of the Basilicas should be given up to the Arians for their use, suggesting either one outside the walls, or the metropolitan church in which St. Ambrose himself officiated. The saint refused, replying, with holy boldness, that a priest could not give up his temple to the

wolves. By this refusal he incurred the hatred of a woman all-powerful for mischief, and who was capable of anything. She first sent soldiers to seize the Basilica of Portia, and to surround that in which St. Ambrose was saying mass. But as all the people rallied round their much-loved bishop, the soldiers did not dare penetrate within the building; only, for several days, a kind of civil war was carried on in Milan. St. Ambrose, during the whole time, never left the church. At one moment before the altar pleading with prayers and tears that no blood might be shed on his account; and then, in the pulpit, explaining the Holy Scriptures, calming the excited people, and teaching them respect for the law, at the same time that he enforced with a brilliancy and energy which electrified his hearers, the doctrine of the liberty of souls, and that of the Church of Christ, which is their home, their refuge, and their mother. To the repeated summons of the Court to give up the Basilicas to the

Emperor, to whom, as they affirmed, everything belonged, he replied, "If the Emperor were to ask for what is mine, although in reality it be the property of the poor, I should not refuse; but the temples of God are not mine to give. Does he wish for my own patrimony? Let him take it. Or my body? I wish for nothing better. Do not fear that I would throw myself on the affection of my people and ask them to defend me. I would far rather offer myself a sacrifice for the altar." To the eunuch who exclaimed, "You despise the Empress; I will have you beheaded;" he replied, "God grant that your threat may be accomplished. I shall suffer as a bishop and a martyr." To the officers of the Emperor, he pleaded his devotion to the young Prince, whereby he had already twice saved his crown from the hands of Maximinian; and then, with the holy boldness which afterwards characterised St. Thomas of Canterbury on a like occasion, exclaimed, "If you wish for my

life, strike; I am ready to die! But God forbid that I should cede to you the heritage of Jesus Christ, the heritage of my predecessors, the heritage of St. Denis, who died in exile for his faith; the heritage of the holy confessor, Eustorgius, and all the other holy bishops, my fathers in God. I will render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, but to God the things which are God's." And to show that he was ready to suffer or to die according to the Emperor's will and pleasure, he left his door open day and night, and remained in his usual room, ready to go into exile or to death according to the orders he should receive. The Empress, frightened at the noble and dignified attitude of the bishop, hesitated and drew back, but only for a little while. Listening to the evil suggestions of her Arian courtiers, she appointed an Arian bishop of Milan, and Ambrose having refused to appear before the mock council she had assembled, and which pretended to judge between him and the Arian inter-

loper, the holy bishop was formally deposed, condemned to exile, and soldiers were sent to seize his person and convey him out of Italy. The saint retired into his cathedral, and the spectacle of the unarmed and venerable old man pleading for his enemies before the altar of God, moved the hearts of the people towards him as one man. They surrounded their pastor, and would not leave him day or night. This state of siege lasted for eight or nine days, and it was during that time that St. Ambrose introduced into the Church of Milan the chanting of the Psalms in alternate parts, which was afterwards universally adopted; and also composed those famous hymns,*

* It is difficult to imagine that these hymns were composed in the midst of such perils, so completely do they breathe a spirit of peace and joy and calm. Those that have descended to our days are:—"Æterne rerum conditor;" "Deus Creator omnium;" "Jam surget hora tertia;" "Veni, Redemptor gentium;" "Illuminans altissimus;" "Fit porta Christi pervia;" "Orabo mente Dominum;" "Somno refectis artubus;" "O lux! beata Trinitas;" "Consors paterni luminis;" "Æterna Christi munera;" "Jesu, nostra Redemptio;" "Conditor alme siderum;" "Rerum

which the Church has embodied in her Liturgy, and which raised the devotion of his people to a pitch of enthusiasm which determined them to die sooner than allow their bishop to fall into the hands of his enemies. This magnificent spectacle touched Augustine to the heart, and awoke all that was noblest in his nature. As for his mother, the sight of the danger of her spiritual father, and the saintlike heroism of his behaviour throughout, filled her with anguish, which yet was mingled with a holy joy and exultation at what she justly considered his greatest triumph. She lived in the church, she hung on his words, and there, in the midst of such solemn influences of time and place, she advanced with rapid strides towards perfection. She lived henceforth but for God and for His

Creator optime;" "Splendor Paternæ Gloriæ;" "Immense cœli conditor;" "Cœli Deus Sanctissime;" "Nox atra rerum contigit;" "Magnæ Deus potentiæ;" "Tu Trinitatis Unitas;" "Æterna cœli gloria;" "Plasmator hominis Deus;" "Summæ Deus clementiæ;" "Lux ecce surgit aurea;" and several others.

Church, and the flower which was so soon to bear its perfect fruit, blossomed more fully day by day.

Little by little the sermons of St. Ambrose began to have their effect on the mind of St. Augustine. His preaching had a singular charm for him; and the marble pulpit is still shown in Milan from whence the holy bishop spoke to his people, and which he rarely entered without seeing below him the holy widow and "the child of many tears." St. Augustine was first ashamed to find that many things which he had ridiculed in the doctrines of the Church had simply no existence except in his own imagination, and that "it was not against the Catholic religion" (as he says in his "Confessions") "that he had barked, but against a chimera invented by its enemies."* Looking back on his own life also, he began to see how many things he was compelled to take *on trust*, whether he

* Is not this equally the case with Englishmen in the present day?

would or not—his birth, for instance; he was the son of Patricius and Monica, but how could he prove it? If, therefore, in human things, he was compelled to believe the witness of others, why not in divine? It is under this aspect, in truth, that religion presents itself to a woman's heart. Those *first causes*, so often a stumbling-block to the would-be learned, she does not discuss or dispute; she *feels* them. No genius is required, thank God, for a clear intuition of the truth. It was this simplicity in his mother's faith, of which Augustine began to see the beauty, and which he longed to imitate. There was one person alone who it seemed could force his way into Augustine's confidence at that time, and that person, strange to say, seemed not to occupy himself with the matter. One would fancy that he was ignorant of or indifferent to the struggles going on in Augustine's mind, and that in the multitude of people and affairs with which he had to deal St. Ambrose had forgotten Monica's son! Over

and over again, St. Augustine went to him and came into his room, of which the door was never closed, hoping for a quiet half-hour, when he could pour out his whole soul to this wise and skilful physician, but either he was surrounded with other people or so absorbed in reading, that Augustine could only now and then obtain a word in answer to some direct question; and after waiting, silent and humbled, for hours, would go away again without having obtained that for which he then began so earnestly to desire. But this conduct of St. Ambrose revealed the wonderful knowledge of character with which God had inspired him. Knowing Augustine's pride of reason and extraordinary powers, he would not allow him to enter into controversy. What controversy ever brought back a soul to God? Besides, not only were Augustine's mental struggles fully known to him, but also his private life. That woman who had so long disputed his heart with God, had followed him to Milan

—he was living publicly with her in sin. Under these circumstances, what was the use of discussion? St. Monica, to whom he revealed his reasons and his plan, could not, in spite of her impatience, fail to recognise their wisdom; she contented herself with redoubling her prayers and tears. "Like the widow of Nain," exclaims St. Augustine, in his "Confessions," "she followed the bier of her son until the poignancy of her grief obtained from God the answer, 'I say unto thee, Arise!'"

The event justified the wisdom of the saint.

Augustine could find no peace; the voice of his conscience re-echoed the tears of his mother, till at last the tempest was at its height. Earnestly to desire to find the truth, and yet to shrink from the life-long sacrifice it will entail; such is the position of hundreds of souls in the days in which we live, and so was it with Augustine. Had his heart been unfettered he would long ago have reconciled himself to

God and His Church; but for fifteen years he had borne the yoke of a culpable *liaison.* He had been faithful to her, and she had followed him in all his wanderings, and given him a son, Adeodatus, the delight of his eyes, who was every day rejoicing both their hearts by the sweetness of his disposition, and the precociousness of his genius. How escape from such a position? How was it possible for him to give her up? And yet, without this sacrifice, how could he be admitted to baptism or confession, or the holy eucharist, or, in fact, to any of the sacraments of the Church? Monica thought of these things day and night; she felt it was no longer a question of belief or disbelief, but of human or divine love; and knowing the tenderness of heart of her son, she asked herself with perfect terror how it would be possible to break a chain so firmly riveted. Augustine had a friend named Alypus, who had followed him from Carthage, and who, though still uninstructed in the Catholic faith, led a life of

such purity and chastity that Augustine's delicate and refined nature was charmed; without the example, however, being of sufficient force to induce him to follow Alypus's counsels. Foiled in her efforts in this direction, Monica now turned her attention to promoting his union with a young girl who seemed to unite all the qualities most desirable in a wife, and would be most calculated to win the heart of her son. She spoke to him on the subject, and that with such insistance, that Augustine, not daring either to accept or refuse, allowed his mother to act for him. The matter was consequently arranged between the respective families, but as the *fiancée* was still quite young, their marriage was to be postponed for two years. As it was impossible, however, for Augustine to remain in the false position in which he then was, Monica pressed more urgently than ever for a separation from the mother of Adeodatus, and this fearful sacrifice was at last consummated. Of what he suffered from

this separation Augustine only tells us one word, but that is enough. He writes, "I allowed myself to be torn from her who shared my life, and as my soul was one with hers, my riven heart shed tears of blood."

Who could feel for sorrow like this as much as a mother? And yet, where it was a question of right or wrong, she never hesitated. Like the French queen who would sooner see her son die than commit one mortal sin, she trampled on the very heart of her boy rather than encourage him, by false tenderness, to continue in a course of direct violation of God's law. As to the object of his love, history is silent as to the part she took in a separation which must have been worse than death. But what is certain is, that she retired to a convent, there to spend the rest of her life in penitence and prayer.

Monica began to breathe freely; the future seemed really promising. Augustine, surrounded by old friends, who had joined

him from Africa, and free from the trammels which had hitherto fettered him, seemed day by day returning to the paths of peace and holiness. The study of Plato, which at this time fell into his hands, opened his mind to understand if not the Gospel, yet the existence of the Word, co-eternal with God; and with this knowledge came a flood of light, and a perception of the truth, which before had been dim and indistinct to him, and led him onwards and upwards to that faith which worketh by love.

"I heard," he exclaims in his "Confessions," "as it were a voice speaking to me with authority, and saying, 'I am He!' and with that voice all my doubts vanished. I should as soon have thought of doubting my existence as of the truth."

How strangely does God's Holy Spirit touch the hearts of men! After having sought, and read, and argued, and disputed for years, suddenly, without any apparent reason, but generally *the day after some*

sacrifice, the clouds disperse, and the sunshine of truth bursts on the soul. One asks oneself, "How is it one never saw it before?" It seems now so clear, so indubitable! And with this light comes a peace and a strength which fills the heart with a joy and exultation impossible to describe.

But Augustine had only made the first step. He felt he could not rest there, and in his feverish agitation he took up the Epistles of St. Paul, the great theologian of the incarnate Word. "It was meet," observes Fletcher, "that the greatest of doctors should be conquered by the greatest of apostles." For the first time, the tremendous mysteries of man's fall, and his redemption by Jesus Christ, became revealed to him in all their inscrutable depth and glory. One might have imagined that it was enough for him to realise all this, and to fly to his mother with the words, "Weep no more. I am as you are." But he had not yet arrived at that. The clouds were not yet entirely dispelled. They would have been

so if he had had the courage to kneel at St. Ambrose's feet, to smite his breast, and confess his faults; for there is a moment in our search after truth when the soul only earns the full light by an act of humility, and an entire surrender of the will to God. One must make the plunge in order to see clearly. Augustine felt this, but he was afraid. He wanted to see more clearly before he knelt, whereas one must kneel to see more clearly. St. Monica watched the crisis with an anxiety in which hope prevailed over fear. She could scarcely resist the words, "How long halt you between two opinions? You believe now, why not act?" Why? because he wanted still two things—humility and purity; and because of his pride, Jesus Christ hid Himself from him. "In spite of my misery," writes St. Augustine, "I wanted to pass for a clever man; and instead of weeping over my sins, I was inflated with vain science. I had found the pearl of great price, but when it came to the point that I must sell all my

goods—that is, make a sacrifice of my passions and position—to buy it, I had not the courage!" In this state of indecision, he resolved at last to consult a holy and venerable old priest named Simplician—one of those kind and saintlike spirits towards whom the young and ardent, wearied and troubled with the storms and passions of life, turn, as to a calm haven of rest, in which they can pour out their hearts in confidence, and find peace. St. Augustine told him all his troubles, and especially the weakness which made him draw back at the very moment when his conscience urged him to press forward. Simplician received him with a gentle smile; listened without surprise to his history; and then, with that profound knowledge of human motives which one so often sees in men of his stamp, proceeded to tell him a story. He related to him the conversion of Victorinus, the translator of those books of Plato which had so charmed Augustine. This celebrated author had followed the same career as

Augustine, and with such success, that he had obtained the rare honour of a statue in the Forum. Afterwards, chance, or rather Providence, induced him to open the Holy Scriptures. Surprised, and entirely convinced, by their study, he said to Simplician, "Do you know that I have become a Christian?"—"I shall believe it," replied Simplician, "when I see you make your profession in the Church of Christ." And Victorinus answered, laughing, "Is it the walls, then, which make a Christian?" But the old priest spoke words of wisdom. Victorinus was afraid of the ridicule of his friends and of the scorn of men. However, he went on reading and praying; and the more he read and prayed, the more he felt his strength and courage increase. At last came the day when he felt more afraid of being denied by Jesus Christ than despised by his friends; and, fearful of any further delay, he ran to Simplician with the words, "Come to the church with me. I will be a Christian." When they were come, and

it was proposed to Victorinus to make his confession of faith in secret, he energetically refused, and, courageously mounting the altar steps, began the "Credo." The crowd, who knew him well, both by sight and by name, called out, "Victorinus! Victorinus!" but he, no way intimidated, pronounced with a firm voice the words which proclaimed his faith. "From that moment," added Simplician, looking fixedly at Augustine, "this illustrious scholar gloried in learning as a little child in the school of Christ. Julian the apostate having forbidden Christians to teach in the schools, his eloquent lips were closed, but with joy he made this, to him, the most painful of all sacrifices, and bowed, under the ignominious yoke of the cross, that head which had so often worn the crown."

This conversation touched Augustine to the quick. He came back to his mother in a state of excitement bordering on enthusiasm, repeated the story of Victorinus, and seemed determined to imitate him with-

out delay. But he still had two wills, the old and the new; and the former induced him to say to his conscience, "By-and-by: wait a little longer!"

Monica became at last thoroughly discouraged and despairing. She had hoped so much from this visit to Simplician! Just at this time an old African friend of theirs, named Pontitianus, came to pay them a visit. He was employed as a military officer in the court of the Emperor, but had always remained a fervent Christian. He had travelled a great deal in Gaul, in Spain, in Italy, and in Egypt; and more and more penetrated with the marvellous work done by the Catholic Church in these countries, he began talking of the rise of religious houses which had taken root in Africa, and numbered already so many thousand men and women, devoting their whole lives to God in a state of virginity and self-abnegation. Augustine knew nothing of all this. Like so many people who live alongside of the Catholic

Church without ever seeing what she is, he had lived for thirty years close to Alexandria without ever having heard of St. Antony, or of those thousands of solitary saints with which the deserts were at that time peopled; still less of the virgins, both in Africa and in Milan itself, for whom St. Ambrose had written his admirable "Treatise," and who, by their noble works and devoted lives, had proved the Church to be indeed the spouse of Christ. St. Augustine, to whom the subject was altogether new, listened with rapt attention, and Pontitianus went on to relate what had happened to him when he was at Triers. One day, whilst the Emperor was at the circus, he had gone with three or four friends to walk in some gardens near the town. On their road two of them went into a hermit's cell, and found a manuscript life of St. Antony. They stopped to read it. The more they read the more they were struck at the picture of devotion it set forth. At last, one of them exclaimed to his friend, "Tell

me to what, after all, does our life tend? What do we seek, or hope for? The favour of the Emperor? But that is here to-day and gone to-morrow! Instead of that, if we will seek the favour of God, it is ours at once, now and for ever!" His words kindled a like spirit in the heart of his friend; and when Pontitianus and the rest joined them and warned them that the day was closing in, and that it was time to return home, they both announced their intention of giving up the world and devoting themselves henceforth solely to the service of God. Touched and surprised, Pontitianus could only congratulate them on having chosen the better part; and their intended brides, moved by a like spirit, on being informed of their decision, at once consecrated their virginity to God, and devoted themselves henceforth to works of charity and piety. Augustine, no longer able to contain his emotion, precipitately left his friend and went out into the garden; thither Alypus followed him, while Monica,

who had eagerly watched the effect of Pontitianus's words, retired hastily to her room, and, throwing herself on her knees, implored the Holy Spirit to touch at last the heart of her son. The moment Augustine saw himself alone with Alypus, he exclaimed, "What are we doing! Did you not hear? The ignorant, the unlearned, carry the kingdom of heaven by storm, while we, with our boasted science, grovel on the earth. Is it not a shame that we have not the courage to imitate them?" Saying this, he left Alypus, who remained mute with astonishment, looking after Augustine, whose agitation showed itself in every feature and every tone of his voice. Yet the struggle was terrible; the nearer he felt himself to the sacrifice, the greater the terror with which the devil inspired him. He threw himself at last under a fig-tree, and there his sobs burst forth uncontrollably; he felt himself utterly miserable, utterly hopeless, when, all of a sudden, a child's voice was heard singing and re-

peating these words, "Take and read! Take and read!" ("Tolle, lege! Tolle, lege!") These words appeared to St. Augustine as a voice from heaven, and rushing back to the place where he had left Alypus and his book, he took up the latter and opened it on the following passage:—"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and impurities; not in contention and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." There was no need to read more; here was the answer to his doubts. He showed them to Alypus, he told him all that had passed in his heart, and together they returned to find St. Monica. Thus, after seventeen years of struggle, did Augustine at last yield to her tears; and, strange to say, it was no sudden light vouchsafed to him, but a revelation of purity and innocence, by the mouth of a child, which had worked the miracle. So true is it that

the difficulty is less in finding the truth than in recovering lost virtue. This conversion has appeared to the Church such a miracle that she has commemorated it by a solemn festival, as she has done that of St. Paul, and the day chosen is the one immediately following the feast of our saint. The last hymns of the office of St. Monica mingle with those which rejoice over the conversion of her son, and thus are they blended together to all time on the altars of the Church.

Augustine's first thought had been to rush to his mother; he threw himself into her arms; he covered her with kisses and tears; the barrier which had so long existed between them was broken down for ever; and in that one long mute embrace, the agony of years rolled away from the mother's heart. At last, he felt the value of her tears. He repeated it, in every shape and way, to the very last day of his life. "It is to my mother," he exclaims, "that I owe all." "If I am thy child, O my

God, it is because Thou gavest me such a mother." "If I prefer the truth to all other things, it is the fruit of my mother's teaching." "If I did not long ago perish in sin and misery, it is because of the long and faithful tears with which she pleaded for me." And so on for ever all through his "Confessions." On Monica's side, the joy seemed almost more than she could bear. It was not only that her son was a Christian, but that she foresaw, in every word he uttered, what it would be when a spirit like his was *all for God.* She had the presentiment of all he would become hereafter; and that, to console her for twenty years of anguish, the glorious crown of a saint would encircle the head of her son.

The little room is still shown at Milan where Monica prayed, and the little garden where the last scene was enacted of that great struggle in which Augustine yielded up his will to God.

CHAPTER IV.

TO give himself up more freely to his newly-found happiness, St. Augustine would have liked to have been in some wilderness alone with his mother. Unfortunately, he was overwhelmed with work, for he had to speak in public several times a week, and to continue his course of lectures to his numerous pupils, the preparation for which was long and arduous. This, in his present frame of mind, was a real martyrdom. Indeed, his first thought had been to send in his resignation, and to give up his professorial chair. But it was then towards the end of the month of August. The vacation commenced on September 16; and, after some deliberation, Augustine resolved, in spite of

the effort, to remain at his post till then. His failing health and weak voice gave him a pretext for withdrawal at a time not far distant; but one difficulty had to be surmounted, and that was—*money*. Both he and his mother lived on his classes, and had no other resource but his talents. Fortunately, at this crisis, Romanianus again intervened, and, by his delicate generosity, enabled him to give up his work; and, when the vacation arrived, to retire into the country. Verecundus, a mutual friend, had already offered to lend them his villa called Cassiacum; and thither, in the month of September 386, Monica and her son, with a few chosen friends, established themselves for six months. It was a charming country house, with spacious rooms, a fine library, beautiful baths, wide terraces, luxuriant gardens, and shady trees. Placed on a hill, it commanded on one side a beautiful view of the fertile plains below; and, on the other, the whole range of the Apennines, on one of the lower spurs of which

the house was situated. The summer was nearly over; but a glorious Italian autumn clothed the trees in orange and red, and shed a soft yet glowing colouring over the whole landscape. It was the very spot and the very season for a torn and struggling spirit to find soothing and rest; and here Augustine set himself diligently to prepare for holy baptism. Navigius was likewise of the party—that suffering, gentle, timid brother of Augustine's, whose whole life was one of silence and prayer; Adeodatus, too, Augustine's gifted son, whose wonderful genius was only equalled by his purity and innocence; Alypus, Augustine's chosen friend, and who, like him, was about to receive the washing of regeneration in the Church of Christ; and two favourite pupils of Augustine's, Trigetius and Licentius, the latter being the son of Romanianus, and therefore bound to him by the double ties of love and gratitude. One was only missing, Augustine's bosom friend, Nebridius, who had left home and parents and friends

to follow him; and who, though unable to share in his retreat, was still present in spirit, and preparing himself to meet Augustine at the baptismal font with a heart all inflamed with the love of God. Such was the cradle prepared by Monica's love for the infant soul of her son. She had thought of everything, and chosen only such congenial spirits to share their solitude as should still further kindle the flame of faith and heroism in his heart. She felt, also, a tender affection for each and all of these his chosen companions; and, with the profound instinct of a saint, foresaw for each a holy and eminent future. "She cared for us as if we were all her children," writes St. Augustine; "and by her look, as much as by her words, raised our hearts to God." Before leaving Milan, she had asked St. Ambrose's advice as to the best way of preparing her son for holy baptism; and Ambrose had recommended, besides solitude and prayer, the earnest study of the Holy Scriptures, and especially of the prophet

Isaiah. Augustine followed the route prescribed for him; but, finding difficulties in the prophet's magnificent conceptions, and fearful lest his reading should degenerate into mere critical study, he opened the Psalms, which had always been Monica's chief comfort. David's may, indeed, be said to be the very voice of prayer, especially of penitential prayer; and here St. Augustine found all that his heart required. Monica read them with him, and pointed out her favourites; she threw fresh light on every passage, and opened to him, for the first time, that treasury of knowledge which years of patient suffering had graven in her heart; but which, to him, in spite of his genius, had been as a sealed book, until the key had been found and opened by her watchful love. At other times, they would hold philosophical conferences; and into these, Monica's penetration and solid understanding entered with a promptitude and a facility which both amazed and delighted Augustine, who never would

permit her to absent herself from them. On one occasion especially, when they had had a little feast to celebrate Augustine's 32nd birthday, the question turned on the aim of the soul. "It can have but one," exclaimed St. Monica, "and that is to know and love the truth." "Tell me," continued Augustine, "what man can be called really happy? Is it not he who has all he wishes for?" "No," replied Monica, eagerly; "if he wishes for what is good, well; but, if not, even should he obtain it, he would be miserable." "O mother!" exclaimed Augustine, "you have arrived, without knowing it, at the very summit of true philosophy." The discussion continuing, the question was asked, "Who can be said to have God really dwelling in him?" It was answered by one, "That it was he who did God's will;" but Adeodatus replied: "He who has the spirit of purity;" still further pressed, he added: "The chaste soul is one that loves God, and Him alone;" and

these pure and noble words finding an echo in Monica's heart, she enlarged upon them with a force and a wisdom which caused Augustine to exclaim, "That in her delicate woman's frame were united the noble faith of a man, the serene wisdom of a sage, the tenderness of a mother, and the fervour of a Christian." Thus to feeble women is often granted a clearness of vision denied to the wise and learned. Thus do love and purity soar to higher flights than genius. And so will it ever be—the knowledge of God comes from the heart. Those will understand Him best who have most loved Him.

The month of April was at hand; and it was the custom for those who were about to receive at Easter the sacrament of Baptism, to give in their names on Ash-Wednesday, and during the forty days of Lent, to attend regularly the special instructions given in church to the catechumens. Augustine, therefore, quitted Cassiacum with his mother to return to Milan. He might

have dispensed with these preparatory catechisings, but he would not. And the beautiful spectacle was daily shown of this man, so eloquent, so famous, so learned, whose knowledge surpassed that of the wisest of his cotemporaries, sitting humbly, like a little child, to receive instruction in the faith, to which he listened with a patience, a modesty, and an attention which amazed all who did not know the secret of his great humility. At last came the much-wished-for moment. According to ancient custom, the vigil of Easter Day had been chosen. Everyone watched that night, and it was after the evening office, and before the mass at dawn, that the sacrament of Baptism was administered. The little church, dedicated at first to St. John the Baptist, and now to the saint whom she received that night in her baptismal font, is still shown to travellers who seek in Milan for traces of a life so strange in its vicissitudes both of nature and grace. The hour having arrived, Augustine went to the church

accompanied by his mother. Every eye was turned on one whose future promised such great things for the Church under whose banner he was now about to enlist for ever. Monica, dressed in her long white robes, bordered with purple, and covered with a veil of the same material, endeavoured in vain to hide the tears of joy which flowed from her eyes.

St. Ambrose arrived, knelt for a few moments in prayer, and the ceremony commenced. Augustine, who was kneeling by the font, rose, and at a sign from the holy bishop, turned towards the east, from whence the light had come which had at last arisen in his soul. Three times he was plunged in the sacred waters, three times he pronounced the profession of faith, "I believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe in the Holy Ghost." After this the bishop mounted the altar steps, and, spreading out his arms, prayed audibly for some moments; and then, on the humble head of St. Augustine, who

was smiting his breast, poured the holy water, saying, "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and Augustine was born again to God and to the Church. Then, according to the custom of the Church in Milan, St. Ambrose, in a linen garment, knelt before St. Augustine and washed his feet, after which he dressed him in a long white tunic, as a symbol of the innocence to which he had been restored. It was his mother who had herself woven this tunic, and it was damp with her joyful tears. Then Augustine was given a lighted taper —meet image of that chaste fire which henceforth would consume his soul—and thus he advanced up to the altar to receive for the first time the God who had redeemed him. No picture can give an idea of scenes like these; no words can do justice to the emotions they call forth. It is said that it was at the conclusion of this touching ceremony, that St. Ambrose and St. Augustine together intoned that magnificent "Te Deum," in-

spired by the circumstances of the time and place, which will ever remain the most glorious hymn of joy and thanksgiving of the people of God. St. Monica stood wrapt in a happiness too great for speech. The words of Simeon rose to her lips, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word." Augustine came out of the little chapel as if transfigured—so humble, so detached from human interests, so absorbed in divine love, it was almost impossible to recognise him. All his doubts, his anxieties, his sadnesses, had vanished. One only thought absorbed him—the marvellous mercy of God, which had rescued him from the abyss into which he had been sunk. But in St. Monica, happiness had developed all the treasures of faith, humility, purity, devotion, and divine love, which, nursed in adversity, required the sunshine of joy to bear their perfect fruit. She had believed in the promises of God, and now it was granted her to see their actual fulfilment. Every prayer had

been answered, first for her husband, then for her son. She wished but for one thing more, and that was, to behold the "King in His beauty," and to worship in His presence; and that moment was at hand. An ineffable peace, which passed all understanding, filled her heart. Like a beautiful summer's evening after a storm, when all noise is hushed, and everything breathes silence and repose, so in this evening of Monica's life, all was still; all anxiety, all vague apprehensions were calmed; nothing remained but the unalterable serenity of a heart full of love and of perfect trust in God. Early, she had begun to serve Him. The sorrows of her married life, and of her widowhood, had driven her to cling to Him more closely as to her only hope, her only stay; her very love for her boy was mingled with love to her Lord, for it was to win him to Jesus Christ that she wept and prayed; and now that he was united with his Saviour, the joy was almost more than she could bear. She had frequently had

ecstasies in prayer, that is, moments when God so completely takes possession of a soul as to raise it above every earthly thought or feeling. These ecstasies redoubled after her son's baptism. On the Day of Pentecost, which was fifty days after, she was so overwhelmed with divine favours, as to be unable to take any nourishment for the ensuing day and night. Her thoughts were in heaven, and it was easy to see that she would not long remain on earth.

In former days, wearied with the world, Augustine had made a plan for retiring into some solitude with his chosen friends, and striving, in the search after truth, to find the happiness which they had vainly sought for elsewhere. But the dream was never realised; each clung too fondly to earthly love. Now, however, those great obstacles were removed; and as to Augustine himself, he had vowed that no woman's love, however pure, should henceforth dispute his heart with God. Every one was of the same mind, and thus began the first idea

of a religious life which was to produce Augustine's famous and immortal "Rule." The question then arose, Where should they go? But here they had no hesitation. Monica herself, Augustine, Navigius, Adeodatus, Alypus, and all the rest were from Africa, and from the environs of Tagaste. What was there to retain them in Italy? So, towards the end of October, 387, they all started for Ostia, from whence they hoped to find some means of returning to their own country. How unlike were those two journeys! Three years before, they had all come separately; Augustine flying from his mother, and having deceived her; Monica, undeterred by dangers and tempests, following in the wake of her son, and watering her path with what then appeared to be fruitless tears! And now they were come back happy and peaceful, hand in hand, their countenances stamped with a like peace and a like heavenly light.

And Monica herself—how she had opposed the voyage!—how she had prayed to

God, in that little chapel of St. Cyprian, that He would prevent her son from leaving Africa! And now she saw clearly that it was from love that God had turned a deaf ear to her prayer; and that untold mercy had been hidden in the very event which had caused her such suffering. Will not this thought make us more ready to give up our will to Him, and to say, "Do, O Lord, as Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt; for Thou knowest all, and lovest us more than all?"

St. Ambrose took leave of the travellers, gave them a last benediction, and, embracing Augustine, prophesied his speedy return. It was St. Cyprian's Day; Monica, after Holy Communion, appeared more than usually raised above the thoughts of earth, when, all of a sudden, she exclaimed with a loud voice, "Let us fly to heaven!" Augustine, Adeodatus, and Alypus, hearing the cry, ran to see what was the matter; for she was in general so still and quiet, that any excitement or impetuosity was con-

trary to her nature; but she could only answer in the words of the Magnificat, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." From that moment the idea of Heaven never left her; not that she had not always that hungering "for a better country" common to all saints; but that until the conversion of Augustine was accomplished, she would have rejected the idea as a sin. But now she had seen the desire of her soul, and was satisfied; there was nothing any longer to detain her here. In passing by Pisa, they went a little out of their way to see a hermitage in the Apennines, inhabited by certain solitaries, who had reproduced in Italy the life of the hermits in the Theban deserts. Before leaving Milan they had likewise visited the religious houses, started or guided by St. Ambrose, in order to gather all the hints they could for their own intended vocation. From thence they came to Civita Vecchia, and here St. Augustine occupied himself with several religious works, and among

others, a Treatise on the Trinity. One day, as he was walking up and down the shore, meditating on this mystery with his mother, they saw a little child, who, having dug a tiny hole in the sand, was filling it with sea-water out of a cockle-shell. Augustine, smiling, asked him whether he thought to empty the whole ocean into it? The child replied, "Why not? It would be easier than to get into your head the incomprehensible ocean of the Holy Trinity!" From Civita Vecchia they went to Rome, and from thence to Ostia, where they hoped to find a vessel to convey them to Africa. Here they were necessarily detained some days; and St. Monica took advantage of the delay to hold still more intimate conversations with her boy on heaven and heavenly things. One lovely evening, when, at an open window, they had been talking for a long time on the joys reserved for the blessed, until both felt, as it were, transported above this earth, St. Monica said, gravely and tenderly, "My

son, there is nothing now to keep me here; I had but one object in life, and that was to see you a Christian and a Catholic. God has granted me still more, since you have learned to despise all that the world can give, to follow Him. Why, therefore, should I linger?" And on another occasion, speaking to Alypus and the others on the happiness of exchanging this life for a better, when they asked her "if she did not dread dying so far away from her own country?" she replied eagerly, "O, no! one is never far from God; and there is no fear but that in the judgment-day my dust will be found to share in the resurrection." This detachment from earthly thoughts and feelings had only been perfected towards the last; for before, she had been anxious about her burying-place. She had built a vault for herself at Tagaste, alongside of her husband; and had made every arrangement when she left Africa, that, in case of her death, her body should be brought back there. But

now she saw clearer—to sleep in Italy or in Africa, what did it matter? Provided that our hearts be eternally united, what does it signify that our dust should rest in the same tomb? Patricius slept in Christ—so would she—so would Augustine a little later; the rest was not worth a thought. Five days after, St. Monica was taken ill with fever, and could not leave her bed: Augustine flattered himself it was the result of the long journey, but she never doubted that her hour was come. A fainting fit, the consequence of an ecstasy, soon followed; so violent and prolonged, that she was believed to be dead. Opening her eyes, however, after a time, she murmured, "Where am I?" and then turning her loving eyes on her son, said to him, tenderly, "You will have to bury your mother here." At these words, Augustine, overcome by emotion, tried in vain to restrain his tears. Navigius exclaimed, "Die! and here! Ah! if it were but at home!" Monica looked at him with an expression

of gentle reproach, and then, turning to Augustine, said, "You hear what he says: bury my body where you will; do not trouble yourself about it; it is not worth while. All I ask of you is, that you will remember me at the altar of God, in whatever place you may be."

From that moment she was silent, and her whole endeavour was to prepare her soul to meet her God. She suffered terribly, but suffering transfigures some souls. Love was stronger than pain or death; and Augustine, who never left her for an instant, helped her, by his ardent prayers, to pass through the terrible struggle with which Monica was to put off her earthly tabernacle. But a still bitterer sacrifice was reserved for her. For nine days the death-struggle had been going on, and Monica earnestly desired to receive the Holy Viaticum; but the sickness was so incessant, that this supreme consolation was refused her. Holding tightly her crucifix in her hands, she endeavoured to reconcile herself

to this terrible deprivation; when a little child came into the room, and, approaching the bed of the dying saint, kissed her on the chest. It was as if He had called her. She at once bowed her head, and, sighing gently, yielded up her spirit to God. She expired in the month of November 387, being in the sixtieth year of her age.

No sooner had she expired, than Adeodatus, with a bitter cry, threw himself on his grandmother's breast, which he deluged with his tears. Augustine alone could not cry. The news of her death spread through the town, and, as the odour of her sanctity had preceded her, the little room was soon thronged with Christian mourners, weeping, yet praising God for so holy a death. Overwhelmed with grief, yet resolved not to allow his tears to have their course, Augustine followed her body to the church, and returned home again, with dry and burning eyes. But the next morning nature would have its way. When he woke and found his mother gone, when he

remembered all her love, all her slave's devotion to him for thirty-three years, his self-control was at an end. "I cried," he writes, "with a violence only equalled by my previous restraint; and sitting on my bed, gave myself up to the luxury of shedding tears for her who had shed so many for me." From that hour till the moment of his death, St. Augustine mourned her in his heart. He never forgot her. Every day he prayed for her. Every morning, according to her dying wish, he made a memento of her at the holy altar. He spoke of her continually, not only to his friends, but even in his sermons. One day, more than thirty years after, he was preaching against the superstitious idea of the dead reappearing on earth, and in the midst exclaimed: "Ah! the dead do not come back, for had it been possible, there is not a night when I should not have seen my mother; she, who could not live apart from me, and who never left me in all my wanderings. For, God forbid

that in a higher state of existence she should cease to love, or that she should not, if she could, have come to console me when I suffer—she who loved me more than words can say!"

But it is still more in his "Confessions" that we see the deep love, the grateful tenderness with which he cherished her memory; it is there that we see what a Christian mother can be—what she may do for her children; and how, when they have been saved by her prayers, she lives again in grateful remembrance in their hearts.

Her death changed Augustine's plans. Instead of going to Africa he returned to Rome, and remained there a year. The remains of St. Monica had been placed in a stone sarcophagus at Ostia; and there they remained until between the sixth and seventh centuries, when, at the time of the invasion of the Lombards, they were removed secretly to the church of St. Aurea, and buried under the altar in a deep vault,

of which the priests alone knew the secret. Already the fame of her sanctity, acquiring, as it did, greater lustre by the conversion of her son, had spread throughout Italy, and festivals were held in her honour, and hymns were composed in her praise; and in painted glass, and pictures, and frescoes, the most famous events in her life found their meet representation. But it was reserved to Pope Martin V. to place her on the altars of the Church. He empowered his confessor, Peter Assalbizi, one of the hermits of the Order of St. Augustine, to go to Ostia, search for St. Monica's relics, and translate them to Rome. Assalbizi took with him Augustine Favaroni, who died afterwards in odour of sanctity, and a certain number of holy religious; and after fervent prayer they proceeded to dig under the altar of the church. After a long and apparently fruitless search, they came suddenly on a secret chamber or vault, which led into a crypt of some size, and here found several sarcophagi. One contained

the body of St. Linus, pope and martyr; another of St. Felix; another of St. Constance; till they came to a large and massive tomb, similar to those in which the Romans buried their dead. They eagerly brought a lamp to read the inscription, and on a strip of lead found engraved the name of "Monica." With joyful, yet trembling hands, they opened the sepulchre, and found the body, decomposed indeed, but emitting so sweet and indescribable a perfume, that every one was impregnated with it. Hastily placing the precious remains in a wooden coffin, they returned to Rome, and arrived on Palm Sunday. Nothing had been prepared for the solemn translation of the relics; but the people who had assembled in crowds for the feast, seeing the little procession, enquired what it was; and on hearing that it was the body of the mother of St. Augustine, their faith broke forth in joyous acclamations. Every one would see and touch it; and a miracle happened, which confirmed their

enthusiasm. A woman pressed through the crowd, bearing in her arms a dying child. The people, touched by her sorrow, and curious as to the result, made way for her. She laid her child on the coffin with an overpowering faith; the child was instantly cured. From that moment the zeal of the people knew no bounds. The sarcophagus was brought the following day from Ostia; and then again miracles followed. The sick were restored to health, the blind received their sight, and that in such numbers, that the Pope attributed it to the special way in which God was pleased to honour the tears of her who had by their means opened the eyes of her son to the truth.

This spontaneous reception of the relics so touched Martin V., that he determined to preside himself at the extraordinary solemnities which were to commemorate her sepulture in the church where the body had been deposited. After high mass, at which he himself officiated, he

pronounced over the relics a most magnificent panegyric, both of the mother and of the son, with an enumeration of the miracles of which all the people had been eye-witnesses, confirming the whole by a solemn bull of canonisation, dated April 27, 1430. He then placed the relics in a beautiful tomb of white marble, enriched with sculptures, the gift of Matteo Veggio di Lodi, reserving only the face, which he enclosed in a crystal reliquary chased with gold, so that to all time her venerable features might be seen, and might speak to the hearts of mothers, with the assurance that God never forsakes those who put their trust in Him.

The concourse of pilgrims necessitating a larger church, Matteo built a wing or side chapel, which he dedicated to St. Monica; and there the number of mothers who came to pray was so great, that Eugenius IV. instituted a confraternity of Christian mothers under her patronage. But before the end of the century, the devotion

increased to such an extent, that a basilica was built on the same site, and dedicated to St. Augustine. On the left is the chapel where, in an urn of Verd-antique under the altar, rests the body of St. Monica. The following short inscription records the fact :—

HIC . JAC . CORPUS . S . MATRIS . MONICAE .

In the same chapel, to the left of the altar, against the wall, is the old tomb of St. Monica. It is a sarcophagus in white stone, with very ancient carving on it. It rests on four lions, and is surmounted by the figure of the saint, in a recumbent position, with long drapery. At the foot of the tomb is the inscription on the following page :—

I.C. Δ. XC.

SEPULCRUM . VBI . B . MONICAE . CORPUS
APUD . OSTIA . TIBERINA . ANNIS . MXLI
JACUIT . OB . IN . EO . EDITA . IN . EJUS .
TRANSLATIONE . MIRACULA . EX
OBSCURO . LOCO . IN . ILLUSTRIOREM
TRANSPONENDUM . FILII . PIENTISS .
CURARENT . ANNO . SALUTIS .
MDLXVI .

On the walls of the chapel, frescoes are painted, commemorating the different events in the life of the saint.

It was at the very time of the completion of this church, that the winds of heresy and infidelity began to blow over the north of Europe. Every Catholic mother was trembling for the soul of her child. It was time that God should send them some sign of hope. Therefore, St. Monica came out of the shade of eleven centuries, and shone through the storm as the rainbow of consolation. Every day the devotion to her increased. Her feast was celebrated

everywhere, and her office inserted in the Roman Breviary. In 1576 Pope Gregory XIII. sent some of her relics to Bologna. Pavia, which possesses the body of St. Augustine, claimed also a portion of his mother's. Treves and Munster had likewise their share. It would be too long to adduce the testimony of numberless great men and saints as to the veneration she has inspired. We will content ourselves with quoting St. François de Sales, that admirable man, whose mission was specially to the hearts of Christian women, and who is never weary of quoting St. Monica as their example and their guide. "Look at St. Monica," he would say to young wives and mothers, "look at her in her household, with her children. Even before Augustine's birth, she dedicated him to the service of God; and, afterwards, so vigorously did she combat the bad inclinations of her boy, that he became even more her child by grace than he had been by nature." Again, to women unhappy in their married lives,

he would say: "Bear your trials and troubles, whatever they may be, with the sweetness and resignation of St. Monica; look at her forbearance, her patience, her silence, her loving gentleness; and learn from her to bear the provoking temper, the cruelty, or the indifference you may meet with, as the Cross which is to bring you nearer to God." But it was especially in the direction of Madame de Chantal that he made use of St. Monica as the pattern for her imitation. Madame de Chantal was left a widow at thirty, with four little children, and a large fortune, and with a strong desire towards perfection. Her inclination led her to prefer above all things the life of a religious.

This wish St. François de Sales thought impossible of realisation, at any rate till her children were older. He wrote to her as follows: "You seek after perfection. Look at St. Monica. Did she leave her boy? And while devoting herself to him, did she not attain to the highest degree of virtue?

I give her to you as model and mistress. Have a little patience," he continues; "you have yet much to learn in humility, patience, gentleness of spirit, resignation, simplicity, and charity; imitate St. Monica in all these things, and in the care of the sick and the suffering, and in bearing the daily provocations and contradictions of those around you. Live, my child, with Jesus and with Mary, as Monica did, amidst darkness, and thorns, and desolations, and a brighter day will come, in God's own time and way." And later, when her boy became wild, and her mother's heart, pierced with anguish and fear, poured itself out in all its sorrow and bitterness into the patient ear of St. François, what was his answer? "Look at your mistress, and read her life. That will console you." Later still, when, after the death of St. François de Sales, the excesses of her son had led to a duel, and she felt that the moment was come when he might die in the wrath of God; that very day,

when, prostrate before the altar, she had given vent to her agony in prayers and tears, she heard a voice saying to her, "Read the 8th Book of St. Augustine's Confessions." And she read; and there learnt how her boy might be saved if only she had the faith and courage to immolate herself for him.

From that moment she conceived the tenderest love for St. Monica. She propagated the devotion to her wherever she could; and on her dying bed, begged to have her life read to her. When it came to the passage where St. Monica expressed her willingness to die far away from her home and people, she exclaimed, pressing the hand of Madame de Montmorency, "This is for me!" and so expired; far away from her beloved Annecy, and uniting her will with that of the saint whom St. François had rightly called her "mistress."

But it is especially in this nineteenth century that the example of St. Monica is needed. Among all sad sights, the sad-

dest is one continually presented to our eyes: that of young men without faith, without hope, living and dying without a thought of God or of the future; with rare intelligences, great in human sciences, rich and prosperous according to this world's reckoning, yet utterly foolish and blind, and poor and miserable, if they could see themselves, as one day they will, before the tribunal of the Great Judge; and alongside of these men there are ever mothers, or wives, or sisters, seeing all, feeling all, and breaking their hearts at the sight. On the 1st of May 1850, a certain number of women, perhaps more tried than the rest, met in the Church of Notre Dame de Sion, founded by the venerable Père Ratisbonne, and remembering the words of our Lord, "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," resolved, at the foot of the altar, to recite daily certain prayers for their children, and to meet once a month for the same object. From this humble

beginning has sprung a Confraternity, or Association of Christian Mothers, under the patronage of St. Monica, which has spread over the whole of the Catholic world, and received the approval of the Holy Father himself. This is the way in which all great works in this century have been brought about. If anyone had told the poor little seamstresses of Lyons, that the pennies they begged from door to door, for the propagation of the faith, would produce millions, they would have laughed at the idea. Had it been announced to the poor servant, who, in an obscure village of Brittany, founded the order of the "Little Sisters of the Poor," that in ten years their numbers would be almost countless, it would have been received with a like incredulity. It is as if, in this era of wonderful progress, when men are drunk with power, because they have invented railroads and electric telegraphs, and the like, God seemed to find pleasure in confounding their pride by making use of the humblest,

and apparently most unlikely means, to attain His great ends.

The Sovereign Pontiff having deigned, by a brief from the Apostolic See, dated 11th March 1856, to raise the Association of Christian Mothers to the dignity of a Confraternity, Monseigneur Sibour, Archbishop of Paris, summoned them to meet him in the Church of Notre Dame de Sion, to announce to them this favour. "Ladies," he exclaimed, "if you wish to become real Christian mothers, fix your eyes on St. Monica; follow in her steps. If you, too, mourn over the wanderings of your sons, do not despair. Imitate her: invoke her aid. It is impossible but that she, who suffered so much on earth from the same cause, should not be touched by your sorrows, and obtain for you, in the conversion of your own children, the happiness which she herself received from our Lord. Only persevere; use the means which she used; offer the sacrifice of your prayers, your tears, your penances, for the sins of your

boys; so that the day may come when, with your last breath, you will be able to say joyfully with her, 'Why should I stay longer here? *My task is done.*'"

From that hour, the Association has spread rapidly, not only in Europe, but in India, Africa, and America; and everywhere the name of St. Monica is in mothers' hearts and on mothers' lips. Yes, past centuries scarcely knew her; their need was not so great: God left her for us. Better days will arise. He who could not resist the tears of the widow of Nain, will be moved by the sight of thousands of mothers pleading for their children's souls. He will not allow a whole generation of young men to perish, wet with their mothers' tears.

Finish your great work, O Monica! and from the Heaven where you share the glory of the son of whom you were in a double sense the mother, look upon the multitude of women now fulfilling the hard and trying mission once entrusted to yourself. Sustain them in their trials, that their faith fail not,

and teach them, by the example of your life, that the flame of evil, kindled by the enemy of souls in the hearts of their children, can be extinguished by the sacred and more powerful flame of a mother's love.

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